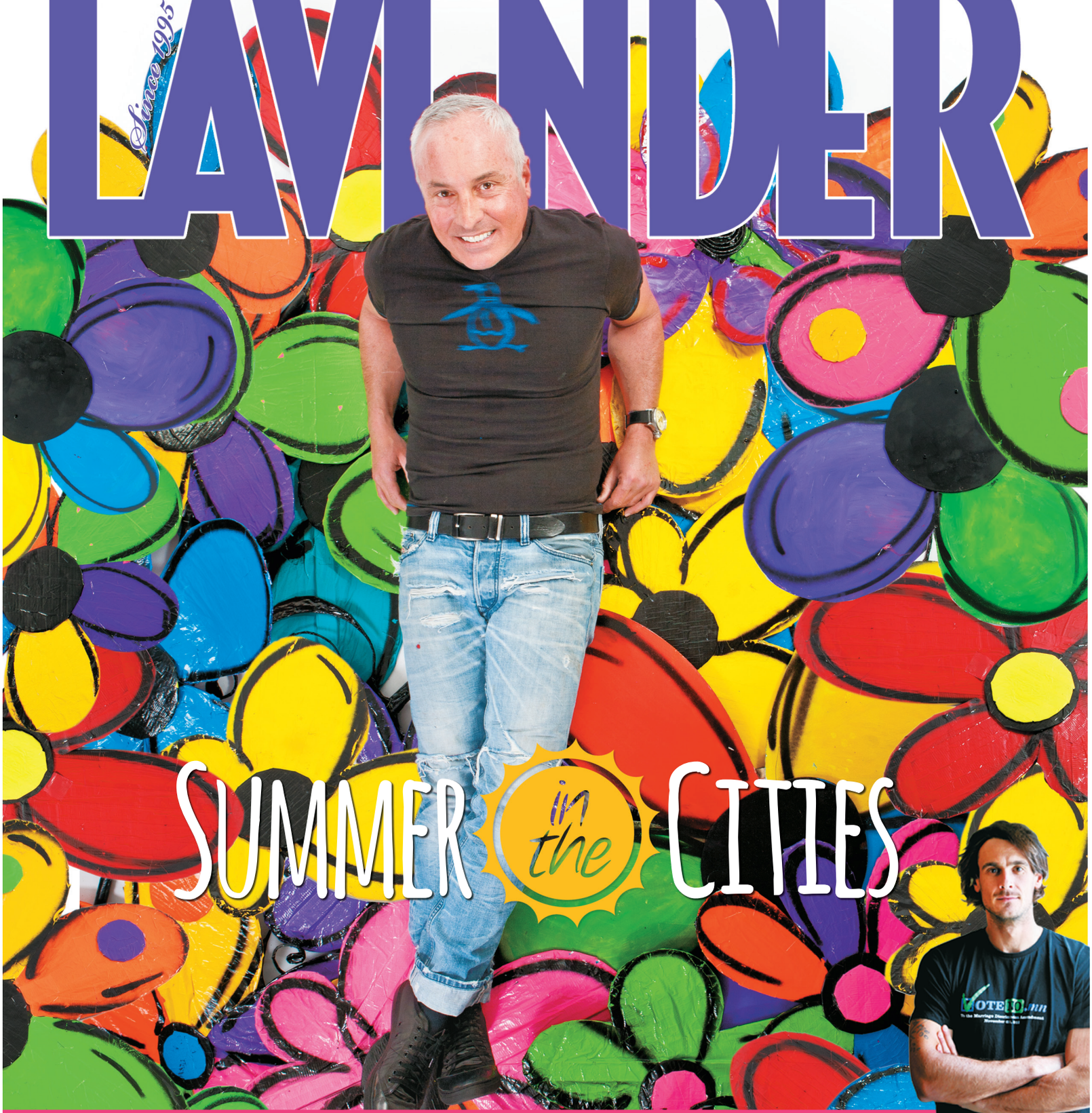
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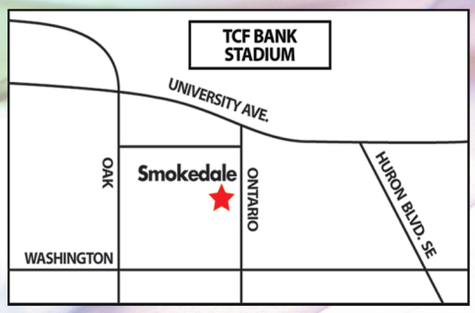
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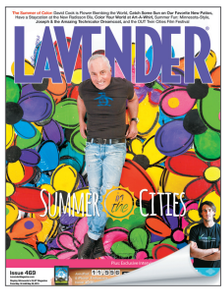
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ON THE COVER

David W. Cook is flower bombing the Twin Cities, the state, the country, the world. Photos by Hubert Bonnet



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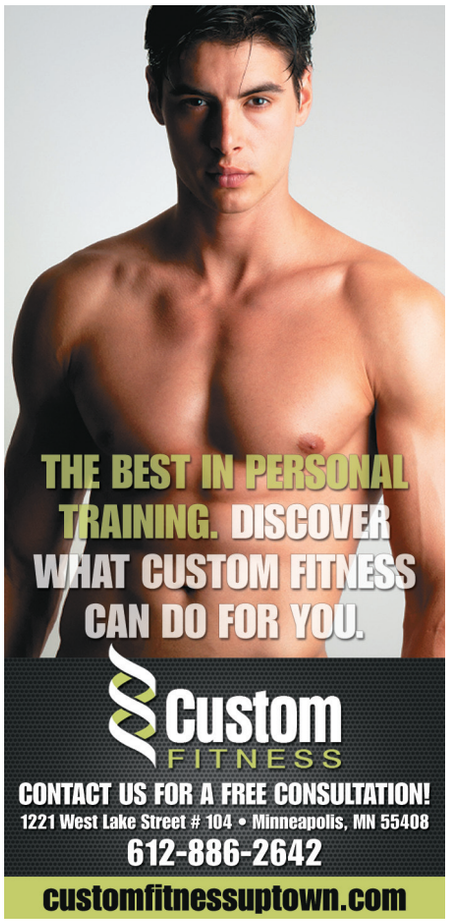
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Of Empathy and Our Future

I'M WRITING this the Friday after the Minnesota House of Representatives passed the marriage bill with a vote of 75-59 on Thursday, May 9. The next issue of *Lavender* will hopefully be one full of triumph, with a special section covering all-things-marriage at the Capitol.

Earlier this week, I had the opportunity to interview ex-Vikings punter, Chris Kluwe, for the second time as Editor of *Lavender*. As of press time, he had been released by the Vikings but his next venture is not yet known. I do hope whoever picks him up knows they're getting a football player with a halo-effect of decency, intelligence, wit, and empowerment. I know I'm not alone in feeling fortified by that guy; his example made it easier to speak up for the community, whether using our own words or his. His were usually more colorful and to the point, no more so than when he speaks of empathy.

In the interview later in this issue, Kluwe talks of how civilizations who lack rational empathy inevitably fall. Societies war with each other, societies splinter and war within themselves...but if we were to put ourselves in each others' shoes and see how an action could negatively affect someone, we will be better prepared to not explode or implode as a civilization. We can see how this works on macro and micro levels; particularly, on the macro level, the GLBT community is fighting for rights in the workplace, in the state, in the nation. Helping the fight is telling stories, humanizing the issues, and forcing empathy. I use "forcing" in terms of evoking empathy as there can be a daunting level of denial in our society–a refusal to acknowledge another's situation as being similar enough to mean that the playing field should be level. Sometimes, this forcing of empathy happens because the tables turn and the person who refused to put him or herself in the position of others is suddenly in that position–as when someone's family member comes out and it's suddenly not okay to discriminate against GLBT people. And, sometimes, there's no forcing of empathy required, it comes by way of leading by example and well-worded messages.

I received a Letter to the Editor as our last issue went to press, it's hand-written by Nancy Hauer of White Bear Lake. It's short, poignant, and hits home the point that people need to have empathy for each other, that our state needs to have empathy for its people:

It's astoundingly wonderful that couples who want to be legally married but currently can't in our state may soon be able to do so.

Not having the basic human right to marry the consenting adult of one's choice also deeply affects the level of well-being of every currently single person who knows that if they do marry, the marriage will not be legal.

Although not nearly as extreme as when African Americans had no rights and were legally considered 60% of a person in slave states, our not having the basic human marriage choice right that everyone else has in our state makes us, perhaps, 95% human in the eyes of our state. Everyone wants to be considered 100% human.

Letters like this are the equivalent to a speech made on the floor of the House of Representatives. Eloquence in ink on a college-rule sheet of paper. I am thrilled for Nancy–and so many others–that this community is on the cusp of being considered 100% human, at least on the basis of marriage equality. May we never forget that we need to continue to bring others with us who are treated as subhuman, which will be a continuing and evolving struggle.

Some of us were able to follow the debate as it happened in the House of Representatives, in the gallery or on TV, online or streaming. Twitter was very effective for following the debate and it was clear when something that was said struck a chord across the listening audience. Memorable pieces came from Rep. Laurie Halverson who levelled the parenting experience by mentioning how we all know "how it hurts to step on a Lego" and Rep. Rena Moran made it clear that she was seeing through the community's eyes as she thought of her ancestors and their fight for civil rights: "Either we are equal or we're not equal."

Rep. Steve Simon spoke of empathy in a calm, assured way during the debate. A vocal supporter of the rights of this community, he took us all to a place of being taught how to be empathetic:

So, this is about freedom and love and commitment. It's about live and let live, live and let love, you might say. But, it's also about compassion. And I know it's most difficult sometimes to be compassionate where the object of the compassion is someone who you maybe don't know. You don't know who they are or what they are or what they hope for. But in that vein, there's a story I love from my own religious tradition about a rabbi who was meeting with his students in a religious school and the rabbi asked his students the question, "What is the precise moment when night ends and a new day begins?"

One of the students said, "The moment when night ends and a new day begins is the moment when there's enough light that I can tell the difference between a cedar tree and an olive tree." And the rabbi said, "No, that's not the answer." Another student said, "Well, Rabbi, I know. The moment when night ends and a new day begins is the moment when there's enough light that I can tell the difference between a sheep and a goat." And the rabbi said, "No, that is not the answer." The rabbi said, "The moment when night ends and a new day begins is the moment when you look into the face of a stranger and see the face of your brother. Until that moment, no matter what time it is, it's still night. But at that moment, that's when the new day begins." I like the sound of that, a new day. I hope we can all go there together and I urge you to vote yes.

Our society as a whole is leaning toward tolerance and equality for the GLBT community, using empathy as either its catalyst or its fuel--or both. We need to take the momentum of these historical moments and carry them further. We should look to our future and consider the prophetic possibilities of catastrophes that can end our civilization according to a brash book called *Beautifully Unique Sparkleponies*, and hope that we've got our proverbial shit together before such catastrophe strikes, so that we survive it. But, whether there's a doomsday on the horizon or not, let us learn from what the empathy of others has given this community, and what we can pay forward to those less fortunate.

With gratitude,

Andy □



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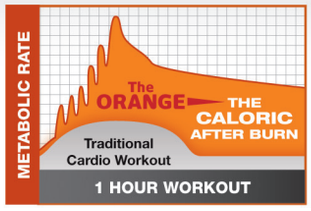
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"I am a 34-year-old NBA center. I'm black. And I'm gay."

Washington Wizards center Jason Collins made this announcement April 29, thirty-eight years after Washington Redskins Dave Kopay became first pro player to come out–after he'd retired, four years before Collins was born.

It's been a long time coming, this first open declaration by an active pro athlete. A player's sexual orientation shouldn't even be an issue, but it's important at this point in time, simply to let people know that there are gays, have been and will be gays, and they're out there in all areas of endeavor.

Pro sports mirror our country's prevailing prejudices. Major league baseball was closed to blacks until Branch Rickey, then president of the Brooklyn Dodgers, undertook a stealth campaign to introduce the first black player into a major league (all-white) team. Rickey's brilliant and ruthless tactics culminated in Jackie Robinson stepping to the plate on April 15, 1947. Robinson's appearance even provoked death threats–to kill a man for hitting a ball with a bat.

Today, pro players still fear the revelation of their (homo)sexuality, over which they have no more control than skin color. But along with prejudice, there is acceptance. Sports writer Larry Brown reveals that legendary Washington Redskins–then Green Bay Packer–head coach Vince Lombardi recognized and protected gay team members, among them the above-mentioned Kopay, and Kopay's partner, team member Jerry Smith. This was back in the 1960s, civil rights days; still seeking equality more than two decades after Branch Rickey and Jackie Robinson. Lombardi was ahead of his time in race issues as well, notes Brown, refusing to let his team frequent establishments "where equal services were not offered to black players."

Wherever there are those working to bar, belittle, prohibit, and exclude others of whatever stripe, there are those behind the scenes, standing firm, refusing to condone bigotry. They may have many and mixed motives. Both Rickey and Lombardi wanted to win games, and not every protector is warm and fuzzy. Lombardi's daughter, for example, was quoted by Brown as saying her dad "treated everyone equally–like dogs."

Nevertheless, these bellwethers appear through time, isolated beacons maintaining standards of fairness, inclusion and humanity, shining until society catches on–and up. □





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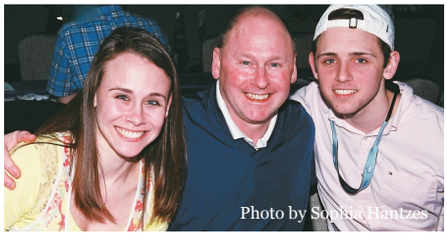

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I Love to Eat: A Love Story With Food. Photo by Lauren B. Photography

I LOVE TO EAT: A LOVE STORY WITH FOOD

Through May 18
Illusion Theater, 528 Hennepin Av., Mpls.
(612) 339-4944
www.illusiontheater.org

Garry Geiken's solo portrayal of legendary chef, James Beard, is a gentle low-key revelation that will surely make you hungry as you watch him prepare some of the character's specialties right up on the Illusion stage.

James Still's conversational script is matched nicely with Michael Robins's fluid directorial approach. The monologue seems to blossom as it flows along: Beard's dreams of singing opera, his 1946 television cooking program, his matter-of-fact way of relating his preferred attraction to other men, and of course, his friendship with Julia Child. The wonderful Geiken reveals Beard's insecurity about his body image and how he yearns to love and be loved by another man, with moving understatement.

THE PRIMROSE PATH

Through June 15
Guthrie Theater,
818 So. 2nd St., Mpls.
(612) 377-2224
www.guthrietheater.org

Playwright Crispin Whittell adapted 19th-century Englishman Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* for the Guthrie and he returns to the same century and theater with a vibrant adaptation of Russian Ivan Turgenev's novel, *Home of the Gentry*. Titled *The Primrose Path*, it muscularly portrays the foibles of rural Russians of means and their intractable marital codes wherein divorce was unthinkable. Some marriages were arranged and could be miserable for both parties.

When Lavretsky (Kyle Fabel) returns to his family's rural estate from Paris, after having left his licentious wife, he swiftly falls in love with innocent young Elizaveta (Suzy Kohane). Unfortunately, hierarchic Russian social codes are as suffocative as Paris high life was reckless. Nonetheless, Lavretsky gets a panicked urge to marry her.

Kohane's performance is capable but its lack of fullness shows in Elizaveta's ironically fascinating and absurd speech about convent life



Sticky Fly. Photo by Petronella Ytsma

facilitating freedom for women. That indoctrinated infantile myth is passionately punctured when her aunt Martha (a terrific Candace Barrett Birk) counters with a gritty description of what convent life is actually like.

Director Roger Rees's crisp staging is enhanced by Sally Wingert and Hugh Kennedy in delightful performances as two gentry types–one congealed in controlling her household, the other congealed in vanity. Ann Michels dazzles and mesmerizes as a mysterious lady from St. Petersburg. Jeff Croiter's sensual lighting at times seems to massage the actors.

There are a few weak links. A Gregorian-style chant opens the production setting on an ominous tone rather than one of the comedic brevity posited by the script. Rees and movement coach Marcela Lorca could have been more imaginative with the nonspeaking servant roles. They are played for cutely benign comic relief. We are meant to laugh when they are tyrannized by the gentry characters. The play is set less than 20 years before the serfs were freed, so they would have been a class headed for a tipping point. Cute is not appropriate or accurate.

STICK FLY

Through May 19
Park Square Theatre,
20 W 7th Place, St. Paul
(651) 291-7005
www.parksquaretheatre.org

The skeletons of a wealthy, entitled, African American family come out of the closet with a vengeance in Lydia R. Diamond's masterful human comedy, *Stick Fly*. Two brothers–insecure younger Kent (Darrien E. Burks) and narcissistic older Flip (Darius Dotch)–bring their sweethearts (Traci Allen and Tracey Maloney) home to meet their parents. But the mother never shows up. However, the father does. He is celebrated neurosurgeon Dr. Joe LeVay, played with swift incisive cruelty by James A. Williams. He has turned emasculating Kent into mentally sadistic sport.

In the kitchen, Cheryl (Brittany Bradford), the daughter of the maid who has called in sick, is substituting. A young black woman, she waits hand and foot on the black men and their ladies as if it was an aristocratic household. But then that is what it is, as Diamond shines the light on the power elite of present day African American aristocracy. You expect a Rice, Condolezza or Susan, to call up the LeVay's Martha's Vineyard cottage to see if anyone wants to meet for cocktails. Diamond grants us privileged entry.

What unfolds is a blisteringly funny reflection on gender and race theory, etymology, and how abruptly and glibly human dignity can be corroded and debased. And you needn't have any background in any of these subjects to enjoy the show. Director Marion McClinton's riveting cast penetrates their characters to the core like few ensembles in recent memory, inhabiting Diamond's ingenious observations of family dynamics.

Whether you think some parts are predictable is beside the point. It's how each character processes (or does not process) events that unfold. Honest broker Diamond never lets race or gender concepts off the hook though–she's even-handed throughout. Even the play's most sympathetic figure, Cheryl, doesn't get a totally free pass. But when everyone's projections seem

Continued on page 20



Sunset Boulevard. Photo by Laurie Etchen

to come to bear on her, Bradford's performance will simply break your heart.

SUNSET BOULEVARD

May 31 – June 23
New Century Theatre, City Center, 615 Hennepin Av., Mpls.
(800) 982-2787
www.hennepintheatretrust.org

In the 1990s, musical theater titan Andrew Lloyd Webber shaped the 1950 Billy Wilder film classic, *Sunset Boulevard*, into one of the biggest and most expensive stage musicals ever. Christopher Hampton and Don Black wrote the lyrics and script in which Norma Desmond, a silent film star has-been, deludes herself with dreams of a comeback. Gloria Swanson's portrayal is among the most legendary of Hollywood history: "Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up."

The '90s reviews of the musical were mixed. Critics raged against the expense and overproduction and that too many movies were being adapted into stage musicals. But uproar aside, it's actually a damn good musical that can work without the excess, so that's why Minneapolis Musical Theatre and Hennepin Theatre Trust's revival with Sarah Gibson as Desmond is of keen interest.

Director Steven Meerdink says "Obviously, we are not building a large scale opulent Hollywood mansion in the New Century Theatre. Since the show is a memory piece, Norma is remembering the events of the last several months from the mental institution in which she has been placed. We will be using projected images to assist in establishing different settings , as well as a live camera to play into the idea of film. The costuming will also be from her memory, so we get the fabulous film style costumes. I truly think that placing the show in a smaller venue not only brings the audience physically closer to the actors but places a greater emphasis on the characters and their entangled relationships. With this setting and approach, the whole musical becomes a more psychological piece of theatre."

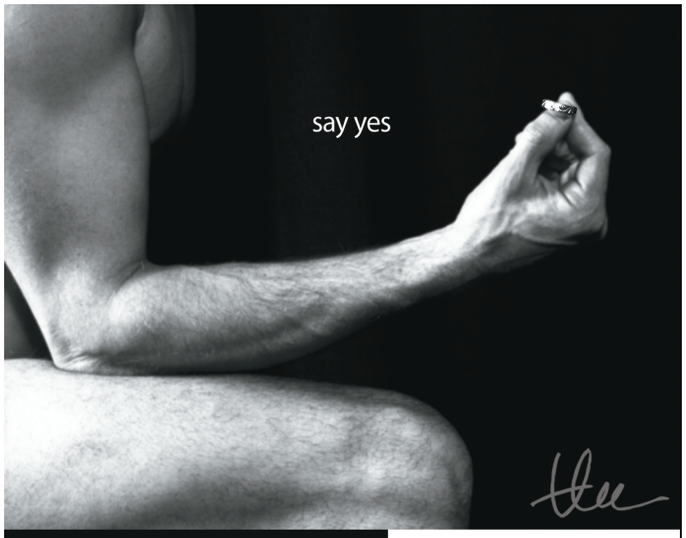
WILLIAM E. JONES SHORT FILMS SHOWCASE

Through May 31
Walker Art Center Lecture Room
1750 Hennepin Ave., Mpls
(612) 375-7600
www.walkerart.org

William E. Jones is known for his fascinating assemblages of film imagery pertaining to gayness and geopolitics. He has also curated a nostalgic but penetrating grouping of short films from the turn of the last century in the Walker Art Center's Lecture Room. As seen through the eyes of Jones, France's groundbreaking Lumiere Brothers, Auguste and Louis, are a solid resource for the uber-masculine: divers in a Milan swimming pool whose almost naked male bodies boldly contrast heavily dressed and hatted women in corsets. Freedom v. repression. German Hussars jumping fences. A Hungarian military review. Two men in a pie eating contest wherein one attempts to eat crust and berries off the other's face with aggression and affection.

But the showcase's most extraordinary offering was shot by American icon Thomas Edison. It's simply and profoundly an extended shot lasting for several minutes from a camera apparently mounted on a city streetcar. As it runs down the track–and you, the viewer, with it–we see motorcars regularly overtaking horse-drawn wagons. Pedestrians dodge in between streetcars and vehicles like kangaroos. DO NOT LEAVE WHILE YOU ARE WATCHING! Just *be* with this rail trip. You will feel utterly transported to a different era. The overall effect in watching it is stunning and for some will be Zen-like. It is a haunting viewing experience that has a primary sense of the majesty and the squalor of American urban life a century ago.

Two other mind-blowing pieces show an actual train crash with men in hats running to the damage and a woman singing the Star Spangled Banner in sign language for the deaf. □



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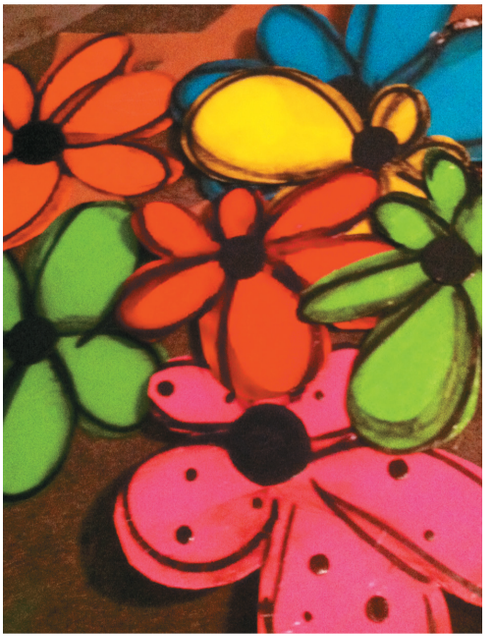




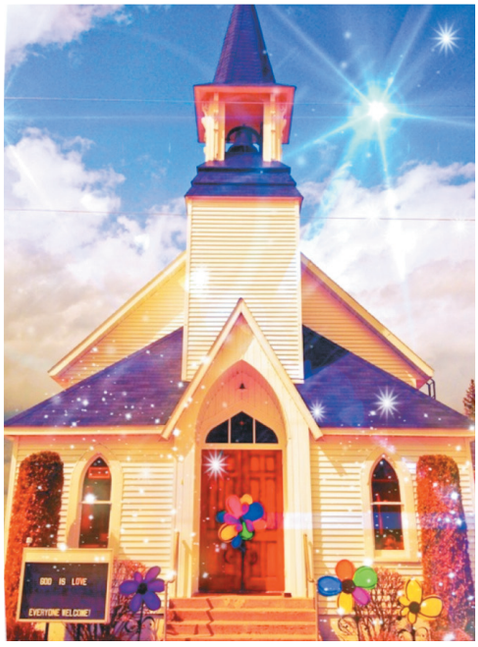











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AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID W. COOK: ARTIST, FLOWER BOMBER, INSPIRATION

By Andy Lien

A bright flower suddenly appeared on my Facebook wall. I'd been virtually flower bombed. A new friend with David Cook, I'd only heard that he's an artist who has taken to flower bombing the Twin Cities with large, theatrical flower sculptures…portable enough to be "planted" wherever he felt the landscape could use more brightness and beauty. With such a late spring this year, he had plenty of blank canvasses to choose from, including scrapyards, the Minneapolis lakes, boulevards in Edina, various churches, and the river.

David grew up in Minnetonka, but draws inspiration from having lived in various locales such as Los Angeles, New York City, Chicago, and South Dakota. Now back in Minnesota, he co-authored a book (which is being made into a musical) with Janet Letnes Martin called *Lemonade for the Lawnboy: The Executives' Wives' Cookbook Committee* which is loaded with humor, recipes, paintings, and drawings of his memories of 16 fabulous upper-crust ladies in Minnetonka. Upon looking at the book full of art and humor, it's easy to see how David would become someone who'd decide to beautify his surroundings by way of flower bombing.

Where are you going with the flower bombing?

Where am I going with these? Honestly, I didn't even know where I was going when I started.

When did you start?

Last fall. I started doing it around Hastings, where I live, in a scrapyard.

Why flowers?

I walked the El Camino de Santiago in Spain. I walked 500 miles across Spain. Almost the whole way, there were all these sunflowers. They faced the sun and they were like humans. They had these haunting, sad-sweet personalities like humans. The Camino colors in Spain are very much the colors of my flowers. Yellows, blues, reds, greens…that's when I started it. I was inspired by the Camino. How could I not be inspired walking a road that is 500 miles and 2000 years old? They came to life then in my head, but I didn't know that until I suddenly did a whole body of work of flowers. I stayed up all night for four days in a row, painting flowers manically, because I had to. Flowers were just pouring out of me. I couldn't stop.

Then, I started building them, the flowers. And then I wanted to put them outside. The contrast is so cool. So, I started experimenting. I put them next to the river, I took pictures of them in different environments. I put the photos on Facebook and people just loved them. Then, I started putting them in more public areas…which was fun. I plant them, the flowers, and then I'd sit in my car and watch people with the flowers. I was sitting there thinking, "My God! People are really responding to this." And the beauty of it is, of all the work I've done in my life as an artist, I don't have to explain this–it's so simple. I don't have to stand there and explain the flowers. Flowers make people smile, that's it.

The simplicity and how fresh they are–I've been running around everywhere, flower bombing. I just did the river and sat in the car for about eight hours. I just make the flowers. They're there, they have their life, I just created them. For the first time as an artist, it's not about me, it's about the medium. I don't need to stand there, it's about the flowers.

I don't mean for this to sound dramatic, but it is. These flowers have saved me. I've suffered from depression. I've been sober for six years. I struggle. Ever since I started doing this, I've noticed that the one or two down days are gone. It's the flowers. Which is pretty cool. I have a purpose as an artist. I feel like I've got more of a purpose than before.

I want other people to know that there's hope. That's what the musical is about–so's the book. It starts out when I'm really screwed up and tortured and messed up and at the end, I'm cured of all the crazy shit in my head and I'm six years sober. I know in our community, guys–men–it's really [prevalent] and I have six years now and there's no damn reason I should be alive today…but I am. Almost seven years in July. My life is great. Inspiring. I'm making people happy. I'm FLOWER BOMBING. What gay guy do you know who's doing that?

Yeah. You're it. □

Keep an eye out for David's flowers around the metro area, the state, and the world. Be sure to buy his book on Amazon and see more of his work in an online gallery at www.lavendermagazine.com.

(Opposite page) Photos by David W. Cook; (Below) Photo by Hubert Bonnet



SLICE

OUR GUIDE TO THE BEST, NEW OUTDOOR DINING

By Joy Summers

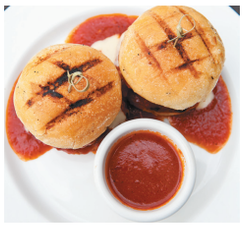
Is it just me, or was this winter kind of an a-wad? Every time we considered packing away the wooly wardrobe, another bracing round of weather would land another crotch shot. It got to the point where I was willing to repent for any number of sins, both committed and imagined. I would do anything to get out of this depressing barrage of frigid weather. Now, it's finally time to spend every single moment outside, basking in the sun. There is no better cure for the ills of a long workday than to install yourself on a patio with a cocktail in hand. While there will likely be long lines at the old standby favorite patios, we have got all the new hot spots right here for you.

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(Above) Cioppino Caruso; (Left) Panini di Salsiacia o palpette.
Photos by Hubert Bonnet

Continued on page 26


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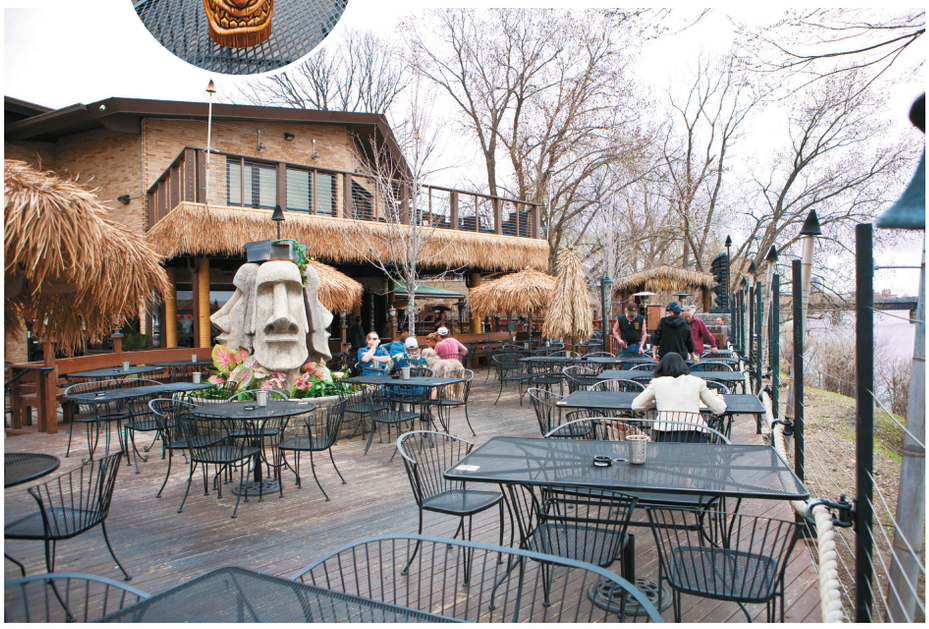


Photo by Hubert Bonnet

Since their inception, Psycho Suzi's has always been a great spot to grab a coconut full of booze and bask in the sun. As they've matured as a restaurant and changed locations, the patio has only grown. This summer, they have added another level to their expansive space overlooking the Mississippi River. The new space is called the Forbidden Cove Bar, with 39 additional seats. In addition to rum-centric tiki drinks, they also have a selection of adult soft-serve ice cream. It's a perfect accompaniment to any summer day tour, 3-hour or otherwise.

EAT SHOP KITCHEN & BAR

16605 County Road 24, Plymouth www.theeatshop.com

For once, you won't hear any griping about driving too far out of my way for a suburban restaurant experience… as long as we're heading to Plymouth. The patio outside this chef-owned restaurant has the hypnotic draw of a late-night, midsummer bonfire. Part of the allure might be the elegant fire pit with the controlled blue flame surrounded by comfortable, plush chairs. The food available is perfect for sharing with friends while relaxing with a couple of glasses of wine. Be certain to try the bacon and giardiniera-topped fries or the tender, succulent white tuna sashimi. An added bonus of dining outdoors at Eat Shop isn't just that the scratch-made food is delicious, but from here, it's easy to see the stars.



Photo courtesy of Eat Shop Kitchen & Bar

Continued on page 28

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BUTCHER & THE BOAR

1121 Hennepin Ave, Minneapolis www.butcherandtheboar.com



Photo by Travis Anderson

When Jack Riebel opened his sausage- and bourbon-fueled hot spot on Hennepin Avenue, it was an instant success. Over a year later, the reservation list is still packed–good luck getting in at prime time for a Saturday night dinner without planning weeks in advance. Shockingly, it's easy to breeze into the back beer garden and set up shop with one–or a dozen–of your closest friends. Somehow, the secret of this beautiful spot hasn't spilled. So, let's keep this between you and me. The space has evolved from a few seats and a sparse menu into a beer and brown booze paradise. They just received approval to expand to a full menu, so they'll be cooking some of their handcrafted sausages and delicious vegetable sides outside on gas and charcoal grills. The full outdoor bar is stocked with an enormous selection of craft brews with excellent representation of local beauties. Also, if for some ungodly reason, this jerkface cold weather decides to return, Butcher & the Boar has a huge tent to shelter us all from the rain and cold. Inside or out, it's a beautiful spot to spend this brief Minnesotan season. I'm already counting down their annual Pride Sausagefest party.

SMACK SHACK

603 Washington Ave North, Minneapolis www.smack-shack.com

GENUINE SMACK SHACK Lobster CASUAL • COASTAL

It hasn't been long, but already the Smack Shack has become a gathering spot for pre-game Twins fans and downtown workers not quite ready to flee the city. The checked tablecloths and boiling, toiling vats of seasoned water waiting for fat lobsters to drop are plenty inviting. However, nothing says, "Bring on the plastic bib!" like their new outdoor space. It's big enough to host a Mini Cooper rally. Surrounded by old, industrial buildings and condos, but with plenty of room for sun, the patio at the new Smack Shack is the perfect place to tuck into one of their ultra-buttery, shellfish-stuffed lobster rolls. Although, it's a bit of a sandwich extravagance at $15.95, it continues to be one of the best bites of food available in this city at any price. As of press time the patio was not yet open, but we were assured that furniture is on the way. Look for them to open early June. □

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SUMMER in the CITIES

MALL OF AMERICA STAYCATION AT THE NEW RADISSON BLU

By Joy Summers

Let the other suckers sit in that bumper-to-bumper traffic in an attempt to flee the city this summer. Why not gather some friends and try a little staycation in exotic Bloomington? I know, stay with me, I promise we're going someplace fun. The brand new Radisson Blu is a stunning location and I've got all the tips to make a grown-up trip to the Megamall a luxury-filled weekend.

RADISSON BLU

Mall of America, Bloomington



Photos courtesy of Radisson Blu

The Radisson Blu is unlike any other hotel outside the twin city limits. The exterior is reminiscent of the Guthrie Theater with a bridge acting as a skyway to the mall. Courteous valets greet you at the entrance as you step into the stunning foyer. There are enormous hanging basket chairs in front of a fire. The entire space is filled with intriguing art.

The rooms are spacious and the beds are deliciously comfortable. Acting as a headboard are framed Minnesota art installations. Ours was capped with Bob Dylan, Joe Mauer, and images of the Grain Belt sign. Every inch of the space is touched by what is awesome about Minnesota and is remarkably snark-free.

Downstairs, the FireLake Grill House & Cocktail Bar also celebrates the local. While everyone seems to want to get on the local bandwagon, FireLake is actually using not just local ingredients, but also local booze in their mixologist-style cocktails. Gather friends for a shop-plotting mission over small plates and adult beverages. The flatbreads are actually crispy bread, rather than crackers or pita bread masquerading as pizza. The salmon pastrami is served with ethereal pancakes, so divine and delicious we could have eaten twice as many. If you're eating light,





THE RADISSON BLU IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER HOTEL OUTSIDE THE TWIN CITY LIMITS. THE EXTERIOR IS REMINISCENT OF THE GUTHRIE THEATER



don't miss the gathered greens salad, studded with candied nuts and Northern Lights blue, creamy blue cheese.

The room is decorated with reclaimed wood and has plenty of huge tables and cozy booths for camping out and plotting your mall attack strategy.

This is key to a successful Mall of America trip: planning for a fanny pack-free experience. While the Nickelodeon Universe is filled with children, the rest of the sprawling Megamall is packed with choices for the discerning shopper, which is why you're best shopping with a crew of friends. Good friends. Friends that will honestly tell you if those pants make your butt look fat (they totally don't).

Make like a VIP and get in touch with Sara Rogers through the Mall of America. She's a trend specialist who can be hired as a personal shopper. While they do have a Gap, this mall isn't your average experience; this is a go-big-or-go-home experience. Check out the luxury shopping at Burberry, Stuart Weitzman, Armani Exchange, Henri Bendel, not to mention the tech shopping to be done at the Mac store. (Although, they've got bargain hunting spots like Nordstrom Rack, DSW, and Marshall's as well.)

When the bags start to get heavy, take a protein break at Masu Sushi and Robata. It's slightly smaller than the Nordeast Minneapolis location, but it has all the same cool-kid zing and pop as the original restaurant. They also have the drink list. The cocktails are as fun to order as they are to drink, like the Godzillita, a spicy ginger plum margarita, or the Double Precious, a sparkling jasmine gin, elderflower martini. The drinks were originally designed by drink master Johnny Michaels, author of the Northstar Bartenders Guild book and main bar man at La Belle Vie. James Beard Award-winning chef Tim McKee is also involved at Masu, so you know the food is serious business. Start with the duck gyoza, its tender exterior is packed with flavor-rich, succulent meat. Follow it up with some of their spicy Firecracker roll and a huge bowl of soul-assuaging ramen.

Schedule yourselves a little pampering

Continued on page 32



at Progressions Salon, where facials start at $50. After all the hiking, your tootsies deserve attention…that's what the Happy Feet treatment is for.

After all wellness has been restored from the hardcore shopping, it's time for some entertainment. That means heading up to the fourth floor. There's a VIP theater where you can enjoy beer, wine, and real food while watching a first-run flick. Or check out a show at the House of Comedy. Many people don't realize that Minnesota is an incubator for some of the best comedy talent in the country. Check out some stand-up and prepare yourself to laugh until you cry.

Or, check out one of the monthly wine and cooking classes at Napa Valley Grille for $52 a person. Participants learn about a Napa Valley vineyard, tasting along the way, and watch a three-course cooking demonstration led by Executive Chef Preston Anderson.

When your day at the mall is done, head back to your room for some chill time, or perhaps one last cocktail at FireLake. Then again, if you want to bring the party to the room (or just lounge and watch reruns of *Girls*), there's even a wine and liquor shop in the mall: Old Vine Spirits. Tons of wines and they even do samples.

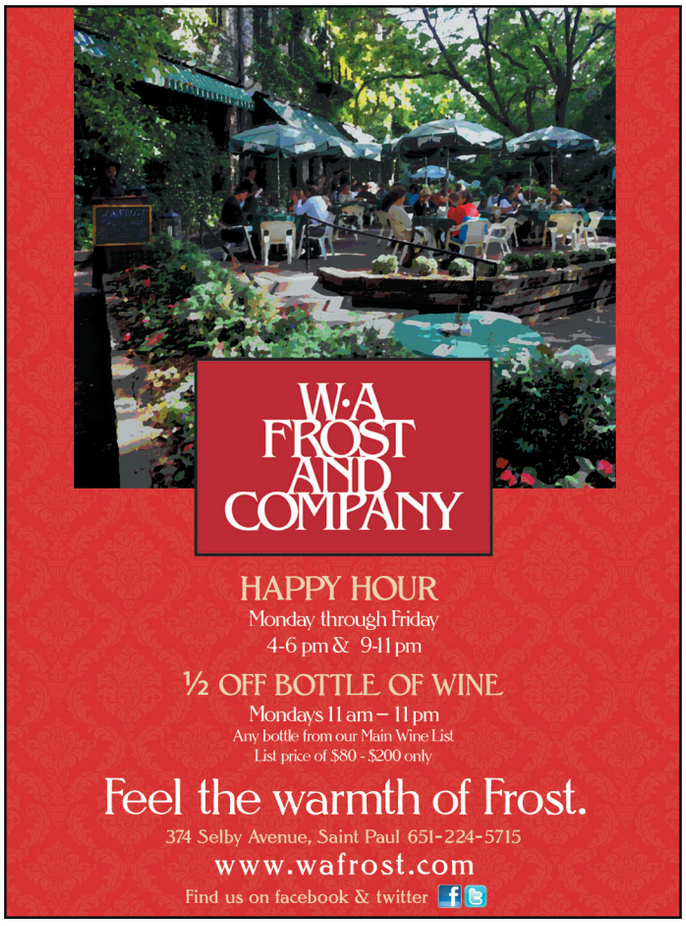
If there is even one thing missing from this little local adventure, just reach out to the concierge at the hotel. Radisson Blu is incredibly helpful, friendly and welcoming. Where else could one have such an overtly friendly, fun and raucous experience that right here in Minnesota? ☐

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www.radissonblu.com
Mall of America
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PUTTING THE "AYCH" IN ART-A-WHIRL

By Andy Lien

The 18th Annual NEMAA Art-A-Whirl is taking over Northeast Minneapolis May 17-19 when studios and galleries open their doors and sell their artistic wares to the public. Various artists in the GLBT community take part in Art-A-Whirl each year, this year we caught up with Heather "Aych" Wayne who will be displaying her work outside the Q.arma building on Quincy. For more information about Art-A-Whirl, visit www.nemaa.org/art-a-whirl.



Photos by Anna Rajdl Photography

HEATHER "AYCH" WAYNE

Minneapolis

How long have you been an artist?

I've enjoyed drawing ever since I was little. I loved drawing as a kid and when I was in high school I started doing cartoon-type drawing. I took a break for about ten years and picked it back up three or four years ago. I started drawing and making t-shirts for friends and have been really happy that I jumped back into it.

I see some of your work makes Minnesota and North Dakota pretty friendly with each other. What's the connection?

My friend, Carrie (in the picture), and other friends lived in North Dakota for a few years and I'd drawn them a picture on a cocktail napkin of Minnesota and North Dakota and they wanted a t-shirt of it. So, I made a t-shirt of it and since then I've been selling them in I Like You in Northeast Minneapolis. It just grew from a t-shirt for friends but is a message of friendship–two things getting along.



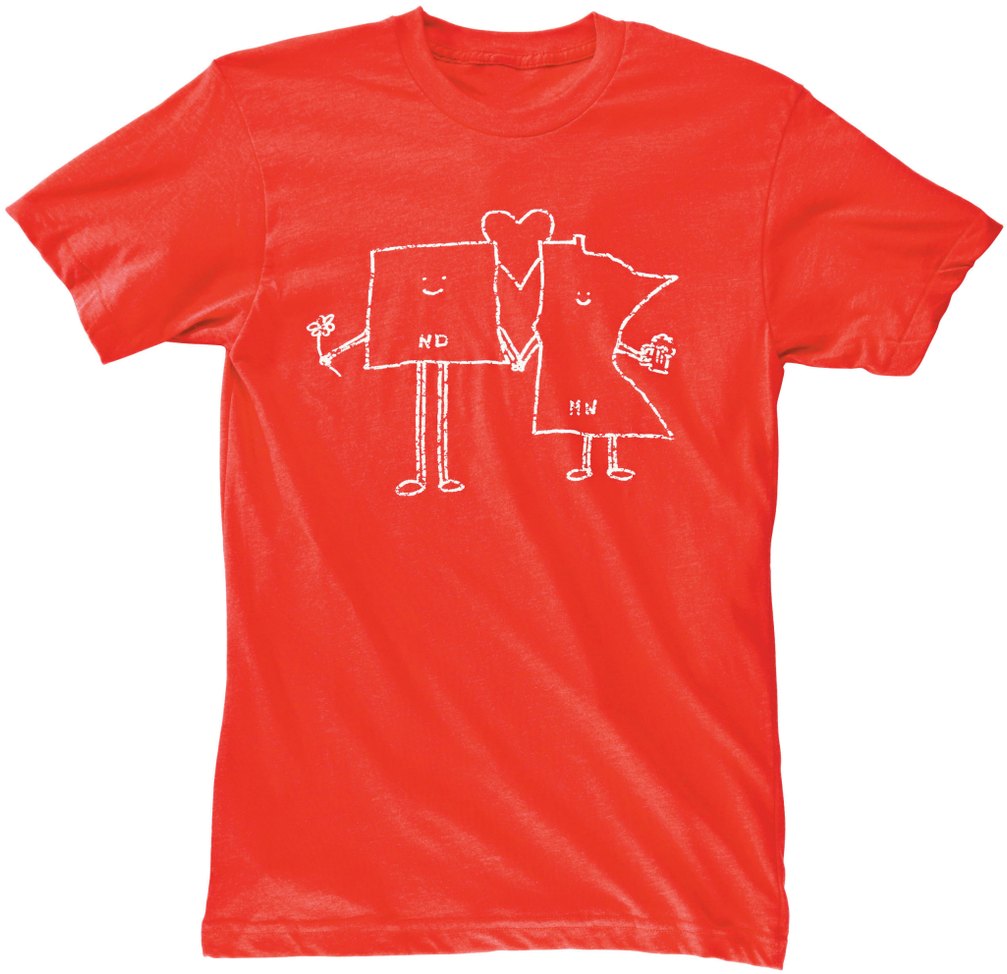
When I realized that there was more interest in just a couple shirts was when I decided to do more designs and start a business. And it's grown by people seeing my friends wear the shirts. I've tailored a Minnesota and Wisconsin one for someone's wedding and I get requests for designs and try to do as many as I can.

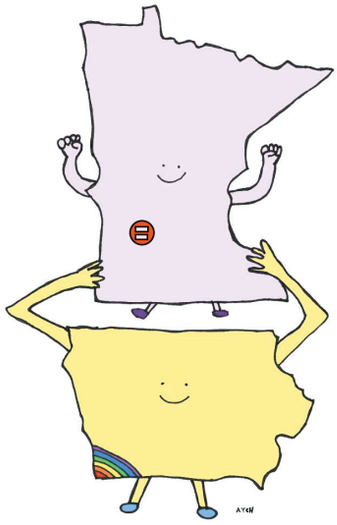
How did you come up with the Minnesota design with the rainbow and equality sign?

I did a really similar design for the VOTE NO Campaign last year–I did it because I wanted to create something that was entirely happy-feeling, and positive-feeling. It's something that I that I think about and I'm pretty sensitive to negative comments about gay marriage, which is hard. So, I wanted to do something in response to those feelings. I think it's hard to do something actively about it, to get a happy and positive message out there to be spread around. I made postcards of the design and sent to some representatives and friends who are either gay and gay supporters as well as family members. That was the idea behind it.

This time, I tailored it to the marriage equality piece. It's the same type of message that I want to spread–I want people to see it and think positive, happy things. It's hard to imagine someone hating that design or feeling negative about gay marriage when they look at it.











You recently become engaged. Who is your beloved?

(Laughs.)

Susan Greve. We met about six years ago but started dating two years ago. The second time I saw her I was very enchanted by her. I felt a spirit connection to her. We had reconnected at her softball game–at Rice and Arlington Fields–and ever since then, it's been a great thing.

Do you know when you might be tying the knot?

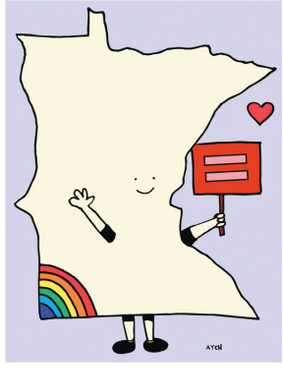
I think this year. I want to do it before the end of the year.

You listed her on your website as an inspiration, along with some other funny things–like Maine coons–that inspire you.

Yeah, she's got a great sense of humor. And she's writer, so we collaborate. She's really good at words and I'm really visual so it works.

(Laughs.)

It's always heartwarming to hear a love story that mixes with a positive message of marriage equality and art. The Minnesota design will be available as postcards or cards at Art-A-Whirl and Aych will also be at Pride this year with more great artwork. Read and see more of Aych at www.theletteraych.com.



SUMMER FUN: MINNESOTA-STYLE

By Kathleen Watson

Minnesota has finally been graced by a more temperate climate, and it's time to enjoy what our beautiful state has to offer! With an endless number of lakes, parks, trails, and rivers, the only hard part of planning summer activities is deciding what to do first. Whether you've lived in the Twin Cities your whole life or you're a newcomer to our fine state, it's time to stop hibernating and get moving. If you think you've done it all before, think again! Take a look at these unique summer activities, and maybe you'll learn something new about our beloved Twin Cities.

SEGWAY TOURS BY MOBILE ENTERTAINMENT

Minneapolis

If you've been near the historic Mill Ruins or Saint Anthony Main on a nice day, chances are you've seen a horde of people riding single-file on Segways and wished you could ride one, too. Wait no longer—book a Segway tour today! Mobile Entertainment, more accurately known as Human on a Stick, provides guided, historic Segway Tours that are fun for anyone ages 13 to 80. Even if you think you know everything about the history of the Twin Cities, you'll discover new things about the area in a memorable way.

Bill Neuenschwander, CEO of Mobile Entertainment, notes that Segway Tours have been around since 2003. He adds, "Minneapolis was home to the first tours on Segways." The original tours were conducted for large businesses and corporations and have grown to include multiple tour routes in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The Segway Tours are led by informative guides who provide humorous insight into local history.

Neuenschwander says it's incredibly easy to ride a Segway. "The people you see riding across the Stone Arch Bridge have only been doing it for less than half an hour…It's one of the few times in your life where you get to do





Photos by HumanOnAStick.com

something that looks like you have to have balance, coordination, and physical ability, and it's really just the opposite. The machine is what does all the magic. All you do is lean forward, and it mimics walking behavior. It's really intuitive." Though it's natural for first-time users to be nervous, Neuenschwander notes that he commonly hears riders exclaim that it's "reading their minds."

There are several tours available throughout Minneapolis and St. Paul, and each tour focuses on a unique aspect of Twin Cities history. The most popular tour, the Magical History Tour, explores the mill ruins and historic sites along the Mississippi River in Minneapolis. For people interested in art and architecture, the Sculpture Garden tour is the perfect way to explore Target Field, the Walker Sculpture Garden, and beautiful downtown architecture. Folks in St. Paul can take the St. Paul Magical History Tour, which highlights historic houses on Summit Avenue, the Minnesota State Capitol, the St. Paul Cathedral, and gangster history.

Public tours are available every day for $80 (which includes refreshments, free passes to museums, and discount coupons for local restaurants). Large groups and corporations can book private tours custom-tailored to fit the needs of their groups. Neuenschwander suggests that you make reservations early because the tours tend to fill up quickly! All tours are covered by a Good Weather Guarantee.

For more information, visit www.humanonastick.com.

Continued on page 38



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NICE RIDE BIKE SYSTEM

Twin Cities

One great way to explore the cities is to hop on a Nice Ride bike. The Nice Ride system is a citywide bike-sharing program that allows users to rent bikes for errands, commutes, and recreational outings. With stations all over the cities, Nice Ride bikes let you access the cities in a new and convenient way. Nice Ride Minnesota's mission is "to enhance the quality of our urban life by providing a convenient, easy-to-use bike sharing program that will provide residents and visitors a healthy, fun, different way to get around town." The Nice Ride bike system became operational in 2010, and it has been expanding ever since. Now, the system has over 110 stations throughout Minneapolis and St. Paul, making the bikes easily accessible to all.

In order to utilize the Nice Ride system, you must purchase a subscription (either 24-hour or year-long) online or at one of the station kiosks. A 24-hour subscription costs only $6—much cheaper than a one-way cab ride—and a yearly subscription is $65. Once a subscription has been purchased, the cost per trip depends on how long you rent the bike. If a trip takes 30 minutes or less, there's no additional trip charge. Then, you're ready to ride! Simply rent a bike at one of the station kiosks, pedal to your destination, and return the bike to another kiosk nearby.

Nice Ride bikes are the perfect way to meander around lakes and through the cities. Because the bikes were designed for "short trips in the city by people wearing regular clothes and carrying ordinary stuff," they're an ideal mode of transportation that is great for your health and the environment.

For more information, visit www.niceridemn.org.

THE NICE RIDE BIKE SYSTEM BECAME OPERATIONAL IN 2010, AND IT HAS BEEN EXPANDING EVER SINCE.

Photo courtesy of Nice Ride Minnesota



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

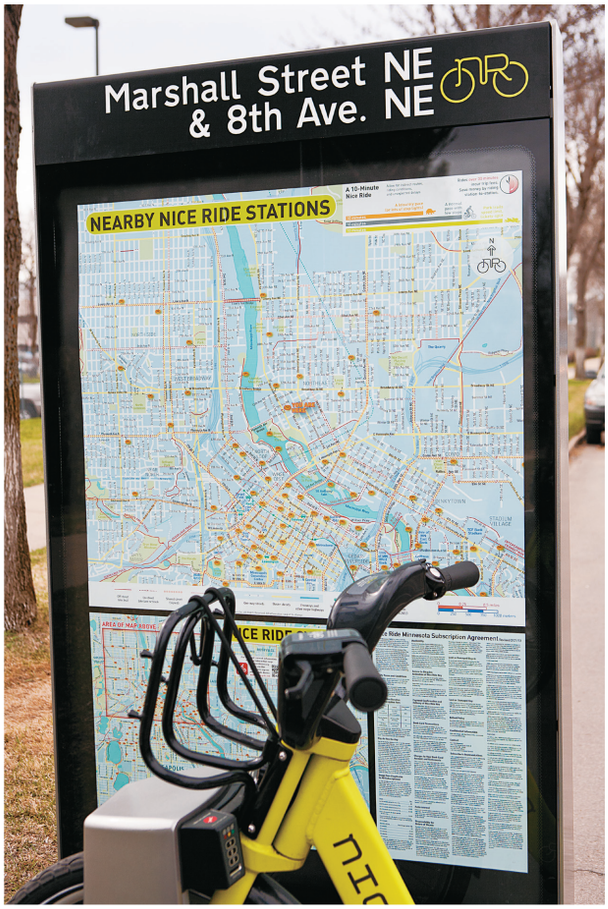




Photo courtesy of Nice Ride Minnesota

Continued on page 40



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WALKER ART CENTER SCULPTURE GARDEN

Minneapolis

The Sculpture Garden at the Walker Art Center is one of the most iconic landmarks of Minneapolis. (Who hasn't seen the huge *Spoonbridge and Cherry*?) With beautiful rolling lawns and sculptures of all sizes around every corner, the Sculpture Garden is the perfect location for a leisurely stroll and artsy photo opportunities.

This summer marks the Sculpture Garden's 20th Anniversary, and many special events are planned to celebrate. In addition to the annual Rock the Garden music festival, film screenings, and other outdoor performances, Artist-designed Mini Golf has returned! Two seven-hole courses feature unique holes designed by local artists and architects, putting an interesting spin on a classic activity. A special exhibition, *Design for the Other 90%*, which offers "socially conscious design solutions for the poor and marginalized around the world," will grace the garden through the beginning of September. Another exciting event is the remounting of several early, site-specific performance art pieces by Trisha Brown on July 5th. Both events are free and open to the public.

Conveniently located near Loring Park, the Walker Sculpture Garden is easily accessible during Twin Cities Pride. But with all the special events happening there this summer, you'll want to visit multiple times!

For more information, visit www.walkerart.org.

THIS SUMMER MARKS THE SCULPTURE GARDEN'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY, AND MANY SPECIAL EVENTS ARE PLANNED TO CELEBRATE.



Photos courtesy of The Walker Art Center





MINNESOTA LAKES, PARKS, AND TRAILS

Minnesota

Photo by Jean Linnell.



Did You Know?

DID YOU KNOW THAT MINNEAPOLIS IS HOME TO A WORLD RECORD-BREAKING STAND-UP PADDLEBOARDER NAMED ALEX LINNELL? IN 2011 AT THE AGE OF 21, ALEX (PICTURED HERE) WAS THE FIRST PERSON TO STAND-UP PADDLEBOARD DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, OVER 2,323 MILES, WHICH IS A WORLD RECORD FOR BOTH THAT PARTICULAR RIVER AS WELL AS THE NUMBER OF MILES PADDLED. TODAY, ALEX LIVES IN UPTOWN AND HAS A COMPANY, UAO STAND UP PADDLEBOARDING, THROUGH WHICH HE OFFERS INSTRUCTION AND BOARD RENTAL. YOU CAN HIRE HIM FOR TOURS ON THE MINNEAPOLIS LAKES, THE ST. CROIX AND MISSISSIPPI RIVERS, OR ANY OTHER BODY OF WATER YOU MIGHT WANT TO EXPLORE--JUST ASK. IF YOU WANT TO STAND-UP PADDLEBOARD ON YOUR OWN, BOARDS ARE AVAILABLE TO RENT FOR AS SHORT AS AN HOUR, TO AS LONG AS THREE DAYS, WITH SOME INSTRUCTION GIVEN AS TO HOW TO DO WHAT IS BECOMING THE "FASTEST GROWING SPORT IN THE WORLD."

Find Alex at www.uaopaddleboarding.com and get out on the water!

There's no doubt Minnesotans love the outdoors. Even in the busy city of Minneapolis, there is some sort of park every six blocks. Twin Cities residents don't have to go far to enjoy a variety of outdoor activities suitable for every skill level. Hike the Winchell Trail on the west side of the Mississippi River to Minnehaha Falls. Pedal across miles of Minnesota bike trails. Kayak through chains of lakes in the heart of the city—from Lake Calhoun through Lake of the Isles to Cedar Lake. Rent a Stand-Up Paddleboard, and spend an hour exploring every inch of Lake Calhoun. Relax on a beach at Lake Nokomis. Meander around Harriet Island. There's no shortage of things to do in the Twin Cities, so make the most of the glorious Minnesota summer.

To learn more about outdoor recreational activities near you, visit www.exploreminnesota.com.



Joseph & The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Photo by Rick Spaulding

JOSEPH & THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT

By Carla Waldemar

When you sign on to sit through the third Chanhassen Dinner Theatre production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* for the third time in six seasons, you sort of grit your teeth and wonder …. And then, the moment the stage lights up and the band starts belting that infectious music, you remember why the show sells out each and every round. Sure, there's the infectious music of Andrew Lloyd Webber's 20-some non-stop tunes—I defy you not to still be humming them tomorrow—but it's Chan's routinely spectacular way with spectaculars that seals the deal. With Artistic Director Michael Brindisi honing the freshness, vibrancy and cheek of previous renditions, costume designer Rich Hamson dressing the cast in technicolor and a bucketload of sequins (never mind Joseph's amazing, truth-in-advertising coat) and Nayna Ramey's spare but striking building-block set, it's choreographer Tamara Kangas Erickson and her troupe of bodies, pliable as wet spaghetti, make this production a must-see.

You know the story (if not, consult Genesis, chapter 39). It's told irreverently, to say the least (okay, thickly frosted with shtick and visual gags—don't miss the sheep) and ever so good-naturedly. (If only this governor as amiable counselor and forgiver of your enemies prevailed in the Middle East today.) □

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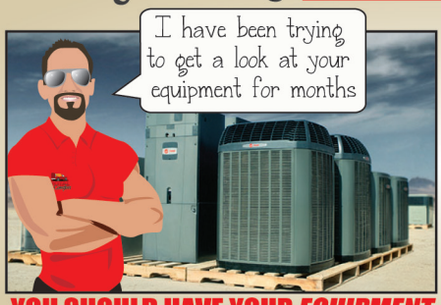
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OUT TWIN CITIES FILM FESTIVAL: 'NO LOOK PASS' UNIQUE DOCUMENTARY ON LESBIAN IDENTITY, WOMEN'S BASKETBALL, AND IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

By John Townsend

No Look Pass **is an absorbing new documentary about Emily Tay. It shows the intersection of her traditionalist Burmese parents, her time on Harvard's women's basketball team and on a professional German team, women she has loved, and the anxiety around coming out as a lesbian.**

I interviewed filmmaker Melissa Johnson about a film that surely had to have been handled with a delicate touch at times.



Photo by Stephen Glidden

JT: I liked the way you combined the immigrant experience, the issue of marriage, lesbian identity, and dreaming for a bright future into *No Look Pass.* Is that how the film emerged as you made it or were these things you had in mind before you started shooting?

MJ: I had all these elements in mind but I set out with a pretty simply premise: follow an exceptionally talented young athlete through her senior year in college into her first year playing professionally. I wanted to see how all the aspects of Emily's complex identity intersect. Basketball serves as the vehicle for her self-discovery. I don't think of it as a gay film, or a sports film, or an immigrant film *per se*–rather it's a coming-of-age film. A film about struggling (and ultimately succeeding) in living *her* version of the American Dream. All of those elements serve as essential pillars.

JT: I got a sense that not everyone you were filming realized that Emily was a lesbian. Did you approach the shooting as simply a documentary about a basketball player?

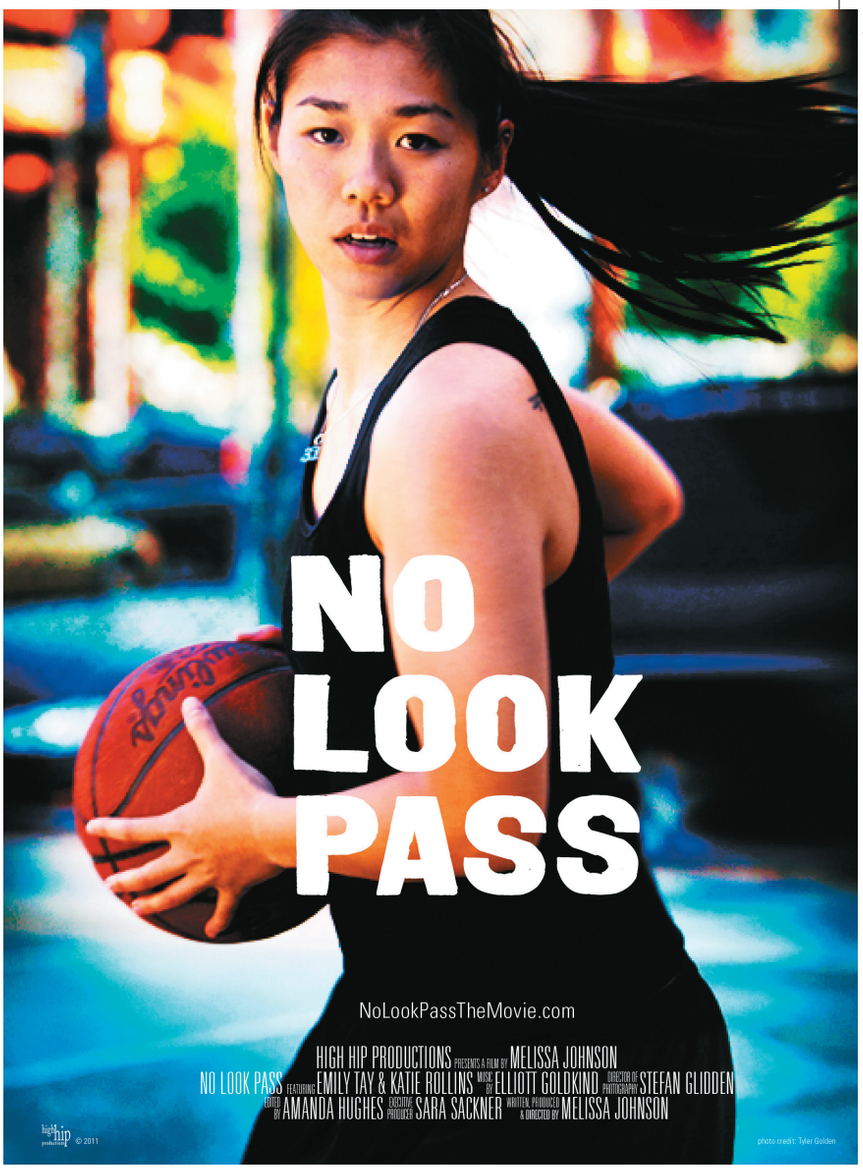
MJ: I felt that I should follow Emily's lead in terms of who knew that she was out and who did not. This was especially sensitive with her parents, who did not know at the time of filming. We told everyone who was participating that it was a story about Emily's life.

JT: While filming the Vernheim section did you run into any resistance or hostility



Photo by Nicol Biesek





from the Germans?

MJ: Everyone in Germany was incredibly open and mellow about our filming–all of the individuals on the team as well as every venue we shot in. Germany is much less litigious than the U.S., so getting releases signed was very easy.

JT: The sections with Angela were filmed before Don't Ask, Don't Tell was rescinded. What were your thoughts at the time about filming Angela's sections? She was clearly up for it, but wasn't it a risk?

MJ: It was a huge risk and I was very nervous about it. Until two weeks before our world premiere at Outfest in Los Angeles we had Angela's face blurred in the film. At that time, Angela told me that she wanted the blur effect removed–she had had enough and was ready to assume whatever consequences would follow. It was incredibly brave on her part and kept me up at night worrying. Luckily, DADT was abolished before anything happened to Angela.

JT: I was moved by the sections with the family. The parents are very likable but Emily is honest about their hard discipline. Emily is also honest about how her older brother seemed to take a back seat to her while growing up. She also cries in deep gratitude in her parents' presence for the sacrifices and extraordinary success their lives have been since leaving Burma.

MJ: I think Emily's parents are amazing. I don't agree with what they wanted for their daughter, especially their expectations about love and marriage. But there's no doubt in my mind that they love Emily and her brother tremendously. Emily goes on a journey throughout the course of the film; by the end, you're right, she's overcome with gratitude for the sacrifices they've made for Emily and her brother. It's interesting to see, too, that despite being the girl and the younger sibling, Emily took on the more "alpha" role compared to her brother. She was thrown into the limelight because of her extraordinary basketball ability.

JT: One of the most touching scenes is when her father talks about when living in Burma, the only school he associated with the U.S. was Harvard, and that it was so awesome that his daughter was a student there.

MJ: I love this scene with Mr. Tay–he's just so authentic. I defy anyone to watch what he says here and not be moved. Even my most macho friends get teared up at this part.

OUT Twin Cities Film Festival
May 29 – June 2
St. Anthony Main Theatre, 115 Main St., Mpls.
(612) 331-4724
www.outtwincitesfilmfest.com

OUT TWIN CITIES FILM FESTIVAL: TEDDY-WINNING* DOCUMENTARY AT OUT TC FILM FEST IS A HARROWING VIEW OF HOMOPHOBIA IN TODAY'S UGANDA

By John Townsend

***Call Me Kuchu* is perhaps the most harrowing documentary ever made about GLBT experience. Filmmakers Malika Zouhall-Worrall and Katherine Fairfax Wright delve right into the homophobic hysteria that has swept Uganda in recent years in which powerful efforts to criminalize homosexuality and lesbianism with the death penalty has enjoyed popular support and grandstanding political sponsorship.**



CALL ME KUCHU

Film

Photo courtesy of OUT Twin Cities Film Festival

We get up close to tabloid editor Giles Mahame who has led the charge by outing numerous gays and lesbians. His frequent little giggles reveal a sadistically ambitious personality. His investigative journalists infiltrate gay clubs and circles posing as gay people. He says plainly that his employees "ignore the right of privacy in the interest of the public." Bear in mind, that outing in Uganda means eviction, ostracism, brutal beating, and being on the run. Mahame, Uganda's Family Life Network, most politicians, and various white American evangelical demagogues like Lou Engle, shown in the film, have created a toxically superstitious zeitgeist where it is believed that gays recruit people to join their ranks, that youth are being forced and lured into homosexuality, and that a homosexual agenda threatens to sweep the Uganda educational system in the same way Engle says it has swept the American educational system.

The so-called "Kill the Gays" bill is continually put on the docket of Ugandan legislators: life imprisonment and death for aggravated homosexuality, prison time for repeat offenders, aiding and abetting the gay and lesbian community, and not reporting any homosexual person you know within 24 hours. The penal code calls homosexuality "unnatural behavior against the order of nature," mimicking Britain's old draconian colonialist code, long rescinded, "carnal knowledge against the order of nature." Since the Bible says the wages of sin are death, then execution is justified.

"Kuchu" means queer and some Ugandan GLBT people have embraced the term. In an interview with a courageous young lesbian, we hear of how as a teen she was "correctively raped" by an older man to make her straight. She ended up with a stillborn child and the HIV virus. Double stigma. There are marvelous interviews with lesbian activist Naomi Ruzindana and with straight ally Bishop Christopher Senyonjo, beloved for his safe havens for GLBT folks. Give this man the Nobel Prize! There are also horrific rally sequences where shouts and chanting reminiscent of pentecostal channeling call for an end to homosexuality. Moreover, we see that queerness is associated with specific Muslim terrorist acts. Thank you to OUT Twin Cities Film Festival and its director Chris Durant for screening this towering documentary.

*FYI: The Teddy Award at the esteemed Berlin International Film Festival is broadly considered to me the most esteemed award in the world for GLBT-oriented filmmaking.

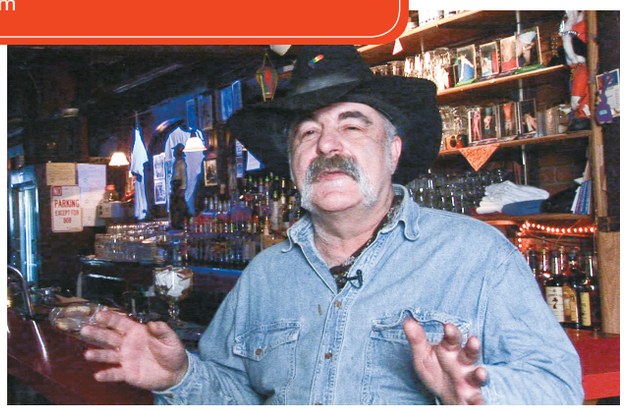
Note: In late 2011 Lavender ran the Uganda: An Overview series. Read it again at www.lavendermagazine.com.

Call Me Kuchu
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St. Anthony Main Theatre, 115 Main St., Mpls.
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THE MAIN TELLS BAR'S COLORFUL THREE-DECADE SAGA

By George Holdgrafer

THE MAIN
Film



The Main Club owner Bob Jansen.
Photo Courtesy of OUT Twin Cities Film Festival

One of the highlights of this year's OUT Twin Cities Film Festival is *The Main*, a Minnesota-made 72-minute documentary by director Julie Casper Roth. Up for the $400 best feature award, it screens June 2, 1 PM, at St. Anthony Main Theatre, 115 Main Street Southeast, Minneapolis.

This year, The Main Club, which debuted in 1983 as the first openly gay bar in the Northland, is celebrating three decades of serving the GLBT community in the Twin Ports of Superior, Wisconsin, and Duluth, Minnesota. Owner Bob Jansen launched this popular establishment with settlement money from a lawsuit against the Roman Catholic College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, which had fired him for being gay. Since then, The Main, perennially the most popular community gathering place for the Twin Ports and surrounding area, has channeled thousands of dollars to various Northland organizations through a bevy of fundraisers.

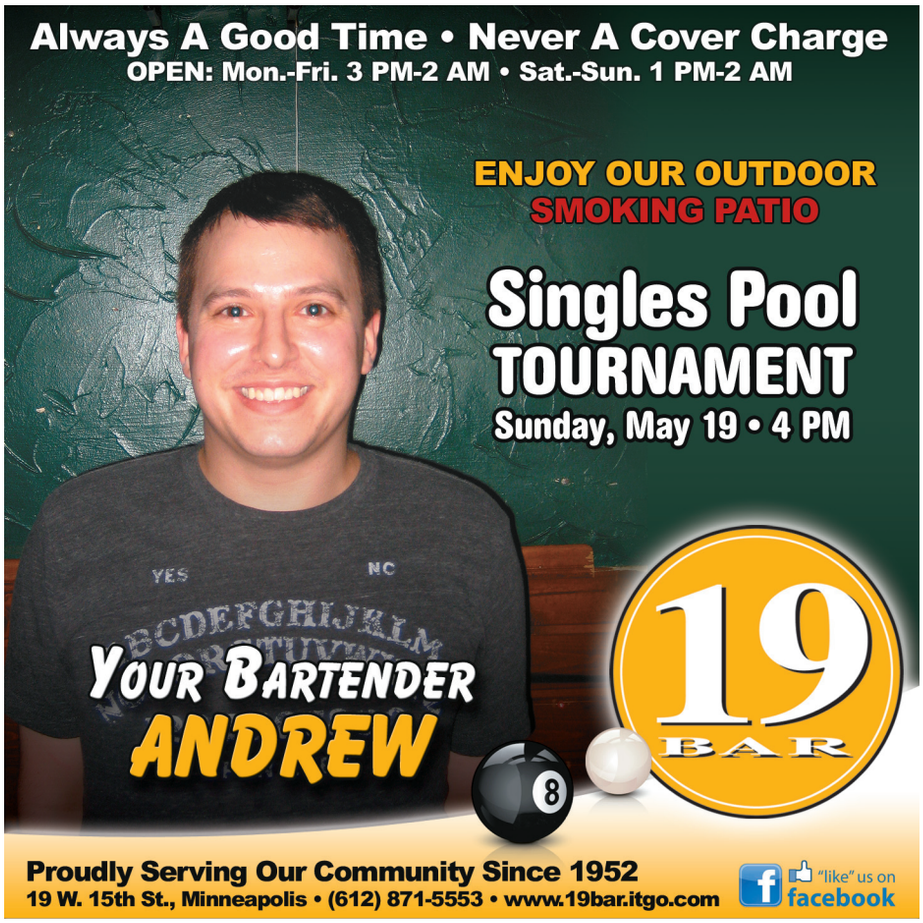
After 30 colorful years of owning the venerable bar, Jansen is ready to turn over the keys to someone new. He encourages anyone interested in acquiring this mainstay who has sufficient capital to contact him at the bar. Even when he is no longer at the helm, however, Jansen certainly will continue his many years of gay activism. □

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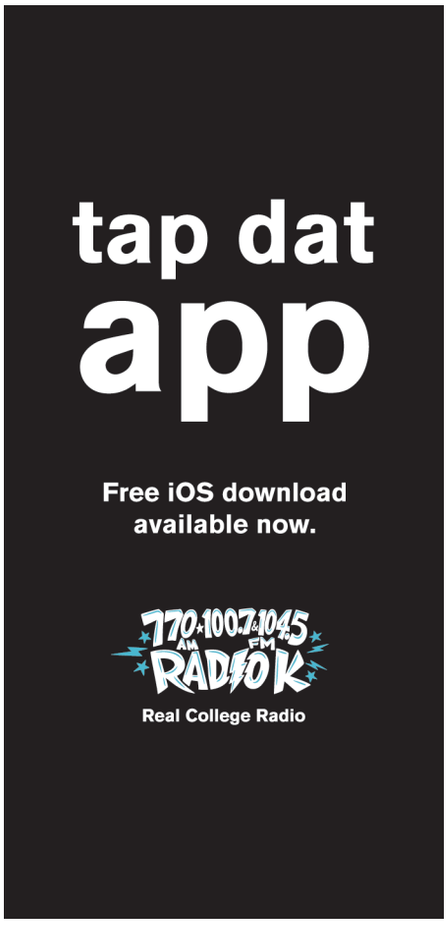





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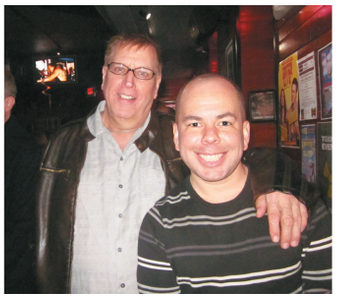

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BAR SHOWCASE | photos by George Holdgrafer

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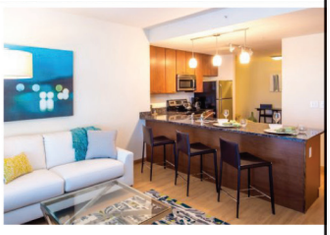
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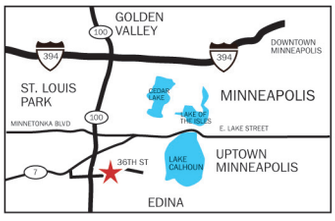




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East Central Pride

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Saturday Night, May 18
eagleBOLTbar • 515 Washington Ave. S., Minneapolis
Is there a little pig in you? Well, there could be. The 3rd Saturday of the month is Trough Night , the leather, bear & underwear night at eagleBOLTbar. The evening includes a $10 beer bust in the Underground. www.eagleboltbar.com

BROADWAY NIGHT
Saturday, May 25 • 5-9pm
Saloon • 830 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis
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Sunday, May 26 • 6pm to 2am
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EAST CENTRAL MINNESOTA PRIDE IN THE PARK
Sunday, June 2 • Noon to 5pm
Voyageur Park • 600 1st Avenue NW, Pine City
Make your way just north of the Twin Cities as Minnesota's small-town Pride kicks off the Pride season. Set in beautiful Voyageur Park, the 9th Annual East Central Minnesota Pride will include music, food vendors, a big Bar-B-Que, 30+ vendors, and a rendezvous of friends, family, and community. As one of the event organizers, Don Quaintance of Isanti, MN said, "The annual picnic allows us to gather together to celebrate how far we've come." Without the event, he an other organizers believe there may not be as strong of an LGBT community in East Central Minnesota. Organizers say the event also serves as a mechanism for civil rights engagement and has improved the quality of life in that part of the state. This year's band lineup includes Yasen Marie, Nobody's Weddin, Harley Wood, and headliner, Chastity Brown. The event is FREE of charge to attend. Search "9th Annual East Central Pride in the Park" on Facebook for event updates. ☐

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Shivering in the Shadows

In our society, parents are primarily responsible for making sure their children are taken care of. Because of the bonds of affinity between a parent and a child, in most cases the parent will make sure the child is fed, nurtured and given a place to lay her head. But, there are those on the edges of society whose children are not supported. These forgotten children are helped by government and other groups. Unfortunately some fall through the cracks and become used by selfish, amoral monsters. Here is where we have a responsibility to help give these child victims a chance.

On July 19, 2011, the legislature passed a "Safe Harbor Act" within the judicial funding bill following the government shutdown. Mike Cook from the Minnesota House of Representatives Public Information Services explains in "Keeping the courts adequately funded," August 11, 2011:

Effective Aug. 1, 2014, it provides that a juvenile under age 16 cannot be prosecuted for a prostitution offense under the state's delinquency code. A 16- or 17-year-old alleged to have committed a first-time prostitution offense will be referred to diversion or child protection with an opportunity for the case to be dismissed. The law increases penalty assessments on patrons of prostitution and dedicates 40 percent of those fines to victim's services for sexually exploited youth.

Basically, sexually exploited children were still considered delinquents under Minnesota law. These changes allow these youth to be immune from prosecution and find help for them to get out of horrific living situations. Immature, alone, and isolated from help, these victims are frightened of everyone involved, from their abusers to the police trying to help them. In fact, this isn't a problem that is going away.

From a *Star Tribune* editorial "Minnesota law for sex trafficking victims," April 11, 2013:

For the past two years, a St. Paul sex ring operated by one family allegedly preyed on especially vulnerable women and children — some as young as 15, and some bipolar or mentally challenged — in what Ramsey County authorities described as 'modern day human slavery.'

The four men and one woman charged Wednesday in connection with the ring used what is becoming the key tool of the trade — ads on adult-oriented websites such as Backpage.com — to traffic the women as far away as Ely, according to the criminal complaint filed by the county attorney's office.

Trapped in this life of exploitation, these children have nowhere to turn even when they are removed from their horrible circumstances. Foster homes may not be an appropriate place for getting them treatment they need. These children have been abused by adults in such ways they are wounded emotionally, mentally and physically. Sometimes they are also purposely made chemically addicted.

From the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's study called "No Wrong Door":

Sexual exploitation is traumatic and destructive, and many sexually exploited youth are provided drugs and alcohol from their traffickers. Because of this, sexually exploited youth have many medical, psychological and chemical health needs. These can include broken bones and other physical traumas, as well as sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, hepatitis, traumatic brain injuries, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. These myriad issues make it difficult for sexually exploited youth and those at risk for exploitation to navigate multiple systems, service agencies and providers.

So, what does this have to do with the GLBT community? I'm glad you asked.

The Williams Institute, a GLBT think tank at UCLA, asked people who work to help the homeless who they were assisting:

"Respondents suggested that a very large portion of their clients were sexual minorities. When asked to give the number of clients that they served (homeless and non-homeless) by their sexual orientation, the figures suggest that 30% of their clients were gay or lesbian and 9% were bisexual."

Considering Gallup found about 3.5% of us identify as GLBT, these percentages are staggering. What's more, this study called, 'Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Services Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Who Are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless,' was published LAST YEAR. This is a contemporaneous finding of an enormous number of vulnerable GLBT youth.

But, that isn't all the Williams Institute study found:

"Respondents say that about four in ten LGBT homeless youth clients have been subject to sexual exploitation and sexual assault. About a third have been in foster care, have experienced domestic partner abuse, and have had contact with the juvenile justice system."

While we have social workers, homeless shelters, and other various public programs helping these children, there is no place for them to go if they are freed from their situation.

We need to change this. The GLBT community needs to take this issue to heart and drive the debate forward to get funding for shelter and counseling for these youth. Rep. Susan Allen, Minneapolis, has proposed state funding for this initiative. That is a start. However do we, as a community, need to consider doing even more? Will this be enough to help these exploited GLBT youth many of whom will have unique challenges? This issue is something no one wants to talk about. No matter how painful, we need to consider doing so. These children need someone to advocate for them. If not us, who? □

The Williams Institute study can be found at this web address: http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Durso-Gates-LGBT-Homeless-Youth-Survey-July-2012.pdf

"No Wrong Door" from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety can be found at this web address: https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/forms-documents/Documents/!2012%20Safe%20Harbor%20Report%20(FINAL).pdf







Chris Kluwe
Goodbye to the Empathetic Punter

The morning of Monday, May 6, those of us who were following the news knew that Vikings punter, Chris Kluwe, had a meeting with management. The Vikings had used their fifth round draft pick for Jeff Locke, a fresh punter from UCLA, which started the speculations that Kluwe would be cut, potentially because of his vocal advocacy for GLBT equality. The bad news was delivered by way of Twitter in true Kluwe style, with "So long Minnesota, and thanks for all the fish!" I shared the news on Lavender's Facebook wall, took a while to think about it, and then sent him an email asking for an interview, but feeling like an ambulance-chaser. What did I want? Not a scoop; I was certain that there'd be nothing to say about whether or not his departure was due to standing up for the community. No, I wanted more from him. I wanted to eke out more word morsels, more thoughts, more philosophies. I wanted more of our Empathetic Punter.

Just before midnight that same day, I got the response from him giving me a time to call the next day–and an apology for not getting back to me earlier, he'd been "kind of swamped" that day. That guy. Always a class act, whether spewing a verbal barrage toward an intolerant Maryland legislator or delivering an impassioned speech as to why the anti-marriage amendment needed to be defeated last November.

Now, as the state's legislature is voting on the freedom to marry, the irony is that we're losing our most visible and potent champion. So, we send him off with great thanks, hopefully with one last win for Minnesota.

How do you feel your performance has been for the Vikings?

I think it's been really good. I'm the top ranked punter in Vikings history. I have pretty much every team record, I've been very consistent, and very good at what I've done over the years.

What would have happened after this last year of your contract? Would you have been looking to stay with the Vikings or go elsewhere?

Yes, I would have been looking to negotiate a contract extension so I could continue on with the team if they wanted to keep me. If they didn't want to keep me, I would become a free agent–free to work with any other team–but I would've preferred to stay with Minnesota. I've gotten to know a lot of people in the state, made friends.

I was reading that you thought you have another four to five years left on your punting leg.

Yes, at least.

What went through your mind when you heard that the Vikings drafted Jeff Locke?

Well, I thought, "There goes my job." It's a pretty clear sign when a team drafts a punter in the fifth round that that's who they're going to go with in the next year. At that point it was, "Okay, I need to be ready to play for another team. It's clear I'm not going to be with the Vikings any longer."

Right away I saw a petition and people starting Facebook campaigns to Keep Kluwe. Do you think that would've had any effect on the Vikings? What do you think about that?

[Laughs.] Uh…probably not, unless the state went into armed revolt. The coaches and managers are generally not known for caving in to fan demands. They're running a business and if they feel they want to go in a different direction, that's what they're going to do.

In terms of the Vikings and whether or not this was a good move for them both sports- and PR-wise, how would you assess this situation if you were an outsider looking in?

That's a tough one. I would look at my stats and how I punted over the years, I'd look at what I've been able to accomplish from a football perspective and I'd ask myself if that was a guy I would've wanted to remain on my team. And, you know, that's something that each person is going to answer differently.

You were an outspoken advocate for the GLBT community this past year and there's plenty of talk as to whether or not cutting you from the Vikings was a punitive or preventative move. Do you have an opinion as to the role your advocacy played?

I'm not sure. I don't know because I'm not in the meetings with the coaches and management when they're making those decisions. I don't know what's said, I don't know what rationale is used, the only thing I can do is go out and keep punting well and hopefully trust that my body of work will let other teams know what I'm capable of.



In thinking about your body of work and the personality that you've become in both Minnesota and the nation, do you think that had a more positive or negative impact on the Vikings?

I'd like to think it had a positive impact on the Vikings. Society, as a whole, is moving more toward equality and I've gotten messages from people who've told me that they're Vikings fans because of what I said or what I've done. So, I think I've been a net positive.

The community clearly attributes a leadership role to you in the fight for equality–do you see and acknowledge that you, personally, affected change?

I hope I did–I felt that that was the right thing to do. I'm glad that we were able to defeat the amendment and I hope that we're able to pass the same-sex marriage bills, too. That's something that I hope Minnesota, as a state, realizes–that people should be free to live their own lives, you shouldn't have to live in fear of oppression by someone else.

I was thinking about the 29 states that don't have employment laws protecting GLBT people against discrimination as I was thinking of your situation. I'm not saying that you were cut because of your advocacy for the GLBT community or that it was a discriminatory act by the Vikings, but the notion isn't so far-fetched considering that it would actually be legal to do so in 29 other states if you were gay. What are your thoughts about this?

That's something I've brought up at quite a few of the schools that I've spoken at–that the mere fact of who you are should not be grounds for you being terminated from your job. That's just wrong no matter which way you look at it. And I think that it's something, as a society, we need to address. It's telling someone that no matter how good you are at your job–how much time you put in, how beneficial you are–if you are a member of the LGBTQ community, then we will get rid of you simply because we don't like you, and that is discrimination.

We know you're scheduled to be in town for the OUT Twin Cities Film Festival and as Grand Marshal of the Twin Cities Pride Parade. We'd love to see you and express our appreciation. Can we expect to see you even with the all the changes coming up for you?

Yes, they're definitely still in my plans. That's one of the things I'm going to tell whichever team I end up with, that I have prior commitments in Minnesota that I'm going to keep because they're important.

Speaking of Pride, that's about when your new book is coming out–it's coming out June 25th, right before Pride, right?

[Laughs.] Yes, which was completely coincidental! When I was asked to be Grand Marshal, I was like, "Wait a minute…I know I have something going on…oh, that's right."

So, tell us about *Beautifully Unique Sparkleponies*. I love the rest of the title: *On Myths, Morons, Free Speech, Football, and Assorted Absurdities*.

Essentially, the book is an assortment of short stories and essays and it deals with the idea of rational empathy, the idea that societies that do not practice empathy–that do not promote equality–end up collapsing, either from conflicts that they provoke from within or conflicts that they seek out. You can look at the historical timeline and every single civilization has failed the test of time. There has been no civilization that has lasted more than a couple thousand years. If we want to survive as a human species, then we have to realize that if we don't work together, instead of against each other, there will come a point when we will hit another ice age, we will hit another meteor event and it will be lights out. It's a certainty that that will happen and so we need to be working with each other instead of trying to splinter each other apart.

Throughout my time here and being alive, society seems to go through these cycles; they gradually start becoming more insular and start looking at other countries and nations as the "other" and they provoke conflict or discord. Or, sometimes they're splintering from within because they view people in their own society as the "other." We're seeing that now with the problems that we have with LGBTQ rights in this country–as well as racism, there's still plenty of racism. The fact that there's still plenty of conflict in the world between countries because of religious beliefs or political beliefs, it's something that we have to address.

Do you think that there's any coming back from this or do you think we'll be falling off the cliff together?

Unless we learn how to practice empathy as a majority of a society, then we will go off the cliff. There is no other outcome. Historically, there has been no other outcome. It's something that unless you can understand why an action should not be taken by putting yourself in the other person's shoes, then inevitably someone is going to take that action. And that will trigger a whole series of other actions that end with people standing around, staring at the rubble, wondering "What happened?"

How do people become more empathetic?

Whenever you do something, put yourself in the other person's shoes. Abide by the Golden Rule: treat others how you would like to be treated. If you can't put yourself in someone else's shoes, you need to learn how to do that because any equation that involves the other person not liking what would happen is not equality, is not tolerant.

If you have an empathic society, it realizes that equality is necessary for everyone.

For my final question, is there anything you'd like to say to the Lavender community?

Thank you. Thank you for the support. Thank you for the kind words. Treat others how you would like to be treated and that goes for everyone. Have empathy for other people, no matter who they are.

Thank you, Chris. You will be sorely missed. □

We asked our Facebook followers if they had anything they wanted to say to Chris Kluwe, here are some of the responses:

Goodbye Chris Kluwe, you were the first Viking I could name and will also be the last.
–Laurel Richmond

I love when people stand up for what they believe in. Its been so refreshing to see a person in sports support equal rights. We need more people like him, he's certainly fearless & will always be admired in my book. Good luck Chris! You're doing a great thing. Remember that.
–Melissa A Kugler

Thank you for using your "veteran power" to speak out on head injuries in the NFL and marriage equity. Last season wasn't your best on the field, so I'll assume this move was, as it should be, purely based on the needs of the team on the field. The proof of the reason will be in whether the Viking's front office encourages other current players to speak out.
–Diane Raff

Thank you for your time with the Vikings, we wouldn't be where we are without your solid record but most importantly, thank you for being a stand up guy. You will be missed!
–Tina Coreen

Good luck with your new team you will be missed by me...keep up the good fight for human rights!!!
–Tina 'Green' LaCasse

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1-USA

Jason Collins Comes Out: NBA Player Becomes First Openly Gay Professional Male Athlete In Major Sport

The Huffington Post reports that NBA center Jason Collins has become the first male athlete in a major professional sport to come out as gay. The 34-year-old admits to dating women when he was younger, hoping to live up to what society expected of him, but eventually felt that embracing the truth of who he is was more important. Collins said that his decision to come out was prompted by the Boston Marathon bombings, stating that "it takes an enormous amount of energy to guard such a big secret. I've endured years of misery and gone to enormous lengths to live a lie. I was certain that my world would fall apart if anyone knew. And yet when I acknowledged my sexuality I felt whole for the first time. I still had the same sense of humor, I still had the same mannerisms and my friends still had my back."

60th Anniversary Of Federal Government's Gay Purge

The *San Diego Gay & Lesbian News* reports that renewed effort to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act launched last week came days before the 60th anniversary of a defining moment in GLBT history, when thousands of employees and contractors were purged from the federal government because they were gay or lesbian. President Dwight Eisenhower issued an executive order on April 27, 1953 which called for the removal of all homosexuals from federal agencies, allegedly because they were considered to be a "godless, immoral group" similar to the Communists which brought such fear to the US government of the 1950s. What became known as the "Lavender Scare" resulted in a vast number of GLBT employees being fired outright, or voluntarily resigning from their positions for fear of being outed.

John Paulk Formally Renounces, Apologizes For Harmful "Ex-Gay" Movement

The *Advocate* reports that the former ex-gay leader said Christianity changed many things for him, but his sexual orientation wasn't among them. In a public statement, Paulk apologized for the harm that he and the movement have caused over the years, and stated that he no longer believes that reparative therapy can "cure" people of their attraction to the same sex. Paulk states: "I know that countless people were harmed by things I said and did in the past. I am truly, truly sorry for the pain I have caused. … From the bottom of my heart I wish I could take back my words and actions that caused anger, depression, guilt and hopelessness. In their place I want to extend love, hope, tenderness, joy and the truth that gay people are loved by God."

PENNSYLVANIA

Issak Wolfe, Transgender Student, Denied Chance At Prom King After Being Placed On "Prom Queen" Ballot

The Huffington Post reports that a transgender high school student from Pennsylvania who was denied a bid to become prom king is getting support from social media communities advocating for equal rights. The Red Lion Area Senior High School senior's name was allegedly placed on the "queen" ballot list by school principal Mark Shue, who said that he was uncomfortable about placing Wolfe's name on the boys' list without informing Wolfe beforehand. Wolfe said: "For a transgendered person, it is degrading to have that, and I wasn't even warned. I would like an apology, at a minimum. I wasn't given a fair opportunity. I mean, if I don't win, I don't win but I'm not a queen."

PENNSYLVANIA

Dayton Makes Appeal For Legislators To Pass Same-Sex Marriage

The Star Tribune reports that Governor Mark Dayton is intensifying pressure on legislators to legalize same-sex marriage this year. Dayton, a longtime supporter of marriage equality, calls the measure "historic legislation", and his campaign sent out an appeal to supporters calling for them to contact their legislators and urge them to support legalizing same-sex marriage. The governor said in the note: "Urge lawmakers in St. Paul to follow their consciences and pass the freedom to marry. We cannot legislate love. Committed, same-sex Minnesota couples deserve to make their own decisions for their own families. It's a simple, yet profound ideal."

PENNSYLVANIA

Joe Bell, Father Of Gay Teen Jadin, To Walk Cross-Country With Anti-Bullying Message

The Huffington Post reports that the father of a gay Oregon teen who committed suicide in February is planning a cross-country tribute in honor of his son. Joe Bell is planning to walk across the United States over a course of two years in memory of his son, starting in his home state of Oregon and planning to cover 15 to 25 miles per day. He hopes to bring a face to the ongoing issue of GLBT students being bullied in schools across the country Bell's 15 year old son Jadin was removed from life support in February after hanging himself due to constant bullying about his sexual orientation.

2-KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstan: Lesbian Wedding Raises Eyebrows

Eurasianet.org reports that the industrial city of Karaganda in northeastern Kazakhstan has seen an event utterly out of the ordinary for the former Soviet Union: a wedding between two women. While same-sex marriage is not recognized in Kazakhstan, the two women—identified only as Karolina and Kristina—wanted to use the ceremony as a symbolic event to bring attention to GLBT rights and discrimination in the former Soviet country. The website Vox Populi profiled the story, sparking lively and very vocal debate on the issue.

3-AUSTRALIA

MP Proposes Referendum On Gay Marriage In Australia

Gay Star News reports that Australian independent MP Tony Windsor has proposed that the nation say yes or no to gay marriage in a referendum in September. Defending the idea of taking issue from the hands of the politicians and giving the decision over to public vote, Windsor commented: "Polls on gay marriage say it's what the population wants. A way to resolve it is through a referendum." Windsor had previously voted against same-sex marriage, but has conceded that his views have changed since he attended a civil union ceremony which he described as being "possibly the most sincere and meaningful occasion" he had witnessed. □

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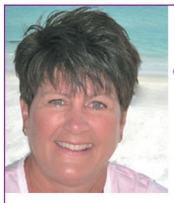
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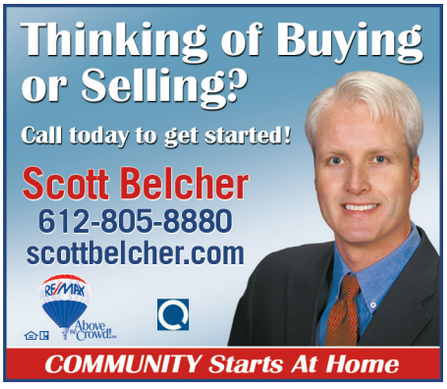

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DATELAND | Jennifer Parello

The Kindness of Strangers

I'M LAZING in a chaise, sipping a tequila gimlet and gazing at a fat tangle of moss hanging from a eucalyptus tree. My toes are dangling in an in-ground pool filled with party guests—all lesbian and all decidedly tipsy. Our hostess is in the kitchen, baking a cream-cheese casserole that is completely inappropriate for the spring heat. Yet it appears at every pool party I've ever attended at this home. And it is welcomed by the drunks in the pool as eagerly as country club ladies greet a cool salad after a sweltering game of golf.

I'm in a strangely magical town on the Florida Gulf Coast known for its vibrant art community and its robust collection of tank-top clad lesbians. Both the climate and the local population's temperament is subtropical—hot, moist, and prone to spectacular storm fronts.

Just as I lift my gimlet glass to my lips, a blast of thunder sounds from the poolside bar.

"She's a whore!" bellows one loud-mouth teetering on a barstool.

At a party like this, in a place like this, that statement could be either an insult or a compliment. I've never yet been to a party here where someone hasn't been accused of whoredom. The first time someone merrily denounced me as a whore, I knew that I had been embraced by this rag-tag gaggle as one of their own.

The women at the party are in their mid- to late-40s, but still refer to themselves as girls. And the name fits. Although they are respected professionals during the work week, come Friday night they put on those damn tank tops and surfer shorts and revert back to teenage habits of drinking beer from cans, yelling loudly over the hard rock blaring from a monster speaker system, and stumbling into romantic entanglements that they'll regret the next morning.

My girlfriend and I first found this refuge five years ago when we were on the run from our own adult lives. We had each left long-term relationships and, as a result of the atomic breakup blast that devastated our social circle, we were highly hated by former friends in our big-city orbit. We had been living in exile for six months when my girlfriend reconnected with a childhood friend who lives in Florida, and she invited us for a visit.

So, battle-worn and mighty vulnerable, we limped south to Florida, a state that we snobbishly considered more than slightly seedy and not a suitable vacation destination for "ladies" of our discriminating tastes. Also, we were leery of spending an entire weekend with a woman who my girlfriend hadn't spoken to in 25 years. As we nervously approached her home, I advised that we should keep our suitcases packed in case we had to flee in the middle of the night.

But we did unpack—and we've never really repacked—because we were embraced from the moment we arrived. This close-knit and incestuous community merely yawned at our roiling relationship drama. Ugly situations like ours were as common as Bloody Marys at Sunday brunch for this crowd of resilient drama queens. We were quickly classified as a couple of whores and invited to our first pool party.

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Trust Your First Impressions and Drunken Sleepover Regrets

Dear Ms. Behavior,

A while back I met a man online who said he had trouble meeting other men. It seemed like we had some things in common, so we kept in touch by email and phone over a number of months. He lived far enough away, so I felt safe talking to him without worrying about him wanting to get close to me; he just didn't sound right (sane) when we Skyped. But he happened to know two unhappy lesbians in my area, so he started visiting. When I met him at the lesbians' apartment, the tent from the previous summer's trip was sprawled out in the living room. The apartment smelled like dog poop and urine. I shoveled my way through the living room to get to the sofa to sit down. I tried to smile and be polite, thinking "people live differently and I should accept it," which I didn't.

Anyway, my "date" turned out to be so needy he covered me like a dense slime and I couldn't breathe. I tried to be nice and tell him I didn't like him "that way," which didn't work. I e-mailed him and I told him I didn't want anything to do with him. I was then sent the "Fuck You" e-mail, followed by several more attempts at correspondence. I finally moved, changed my phone number and blocked his e-mail; I think I've finally gotten rid of him.

I wanted to share that story because I learned something valuable. I should have run to my car at the first scent of dog poop in the Lesbians' apartment.

-STEVE

Dear Steve,

Actually, your first hint that things wouldn't go well was that your prospective date did not sound sane over Skype. If you felt safe only because he lived far away, why did you have any further contact with him?

Ms. Behavior is alarmed by how many of her readers ignore obvious hints. They say things like, "I suspected he was psycho, unethical, and had bad hygiene on our first date. When we broke up six months later, I knew it was true because he broke into my apartment, stole all my money, and left his smelly clothing on my bed." Hello? What happened to that first hint, 180 days earlier?

As for the lesbian tent and the dog's bodily fluids, there is an obvious explanation. In cool weather, plenty of sporty lesbians secretly camp in their living rooms and play a game with their dogs, pretending that they are in the great outdoors.

Dear Ms. Behavior:

My ex-boyfriend Barry showed up a drunken mess on my doorstep last weekend. He was reeking of booze and raving like a lunatic. His wife (that's right, wife) and he had had a big public drunken brawl and she kicked him out. I put down my book, threw an extra log on the fire, made a pot of coffee, and let him stay the night on the sofa. I felt sorry for Barry, although I'll admit I was thankful all the while for being spared this drunken drama on a daily basis. The thing is, after he left the next morning (of course he went back to his wife; he always does), I felt upset and anxious and kind of depressed. Should I call him and tell him that his actions do have consequences? I think he should know.

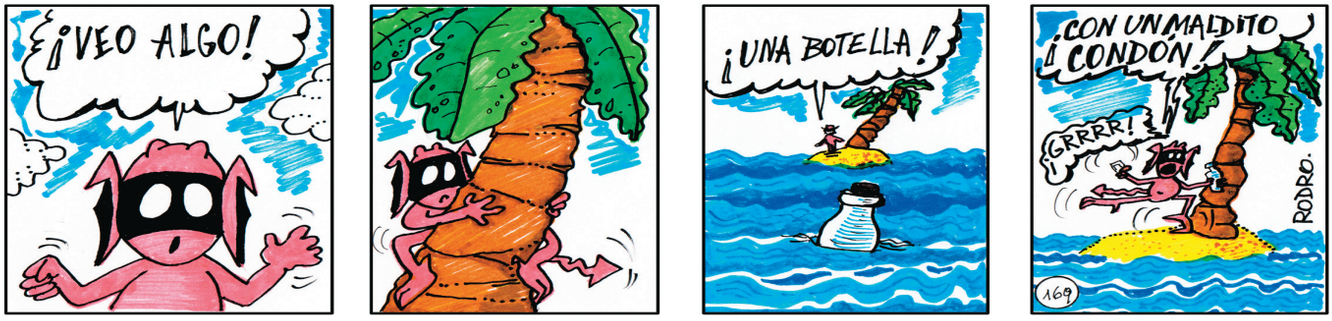
-AMBUSHED

Dear Ambushed:

Barry won't stop showing up at your house like a drunken mess just because it makes you feel anxious and depressed. Drunks are a bit more self-centered than that. Remind Barry that one of the benefits of your break-up is that you don't have to play Florence Nightingale anymore. (His wife doesn't either, but she'll have to figure that out for herself.) The hard part for you will be sticking to it, but if sympathetic friends turn him away when he's "reeking of booze and raving like a lunatic," Barry may some day seek help for his problem. □

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Facebook's Glass Wall

IF YOU'RE an asshole, own it. Be an asshole. Make no apologies. Feel no compassion for those you burn–but mind you–from your peers you will see none, either.

If you're an angel, fuck you.

If you're neither, we quite like you. You can stay.

But if you're a hypocrite, you're the worst. Please go away.

Very recently I found on Facebook a picture of an overweight woman standing at a McDonald's counter awaiting her order. The picture shows her wearing clothes that are too small, and she's oblivious to the camera behind her. The photographer annotated the photo with the words "Your ass … It's on backwards" in blocky white font. (If you're unclear as to the comment's intent, trust that it was a totally asshole thing to do, meant in mean-spirited humor.)

This photo appeared in my newsfeed from a friend who'd shared it from another. After I posted to his share "I'm gonna guess you're against bullying, huh?" I saw that the original had 1,500 likes and 1,200 shares, so I took a screenshot of the picture and the cruel comments that accompanied it, and shared with my friends my opinion: this is a form of bullying.

My suggestion that the photo was a form of bullying excited some people to agree, and a few to dispute. The objection from those who disagreed with me was around what it means to be a "bully." Suggested were things like "This isn't bullying. This is just in poor taste." The word "asshole," rather than "bully," was thrown out in reference to the photographer. And an intriguing notion arose that using the word "bullying" in so free a context desensitizes people to its true meaning–that somehow using "bullying" outside the boundaries of face-to-face degradation diminishes its impact.

The last thought gave me pause: was I so determined to share my holier-than-thou opinion that I used "bullying" inappropriately? I write a lot about bullying, after all. I pretend to know how horrible bullying is, and I guess we all do at some level, but maybe I defined it too loosely.

Facebook allows people to share who they are (or who they want to be) from behind glass walls through which no one can see: people in the bask of their backlit laptops, thinking what they think, choosing who they are, and passing through their walls what they want the world to see. Facebook thus can make anyone seem instantly profound and sincere. Take a look at your newsfeed, ignore the grumpy cat memes, and take note of its motivational photos and its inspiring quotes.

Facebook, though, has also given rise to the Cyber Bully, providing anonymity, or at least a sheet of apathy, to the assholes who appear normal in public.

To me, yes, the picture is a form of cyber bullying. Under the crushing weight of a monster's glass Facebook wall, a woman, clearly recognizable to anyone who knows her, became the target of a thousand jokes. For what took seconds and a camera phone, an asshole violated her dignity.

But assume that she never knows this photo exists. Does her ignorance relieve her photographer of being a "bully?" This was the suggestion of someone who'd disagreed with my "bully" assessment.

Well, think of it this way: whoever it was taking this photo wasn't doing it to be nice; he also wasn't doing it only to hurt her. The person who took this photo wanted to do something more devastating: the asshole wanted to throw not only her, but every person her size, into the judgmental fire of a cyber world in which the bullies can hide behind glass walls.

Moreover, the people sharing this picture are worse than its asshole photographer: they are the captive audience to which the photographer plays–they are his empty, ugly instruments.

What's funny about all of this, if there is any humor or irony to be found, is that this army of bullies–the viruses that infect our newsfeeds with such mean-spirited humor–are more times than not the same people who feed through their glass walls the inspiring quotes and motivational pictures we so adore. □

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